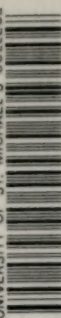
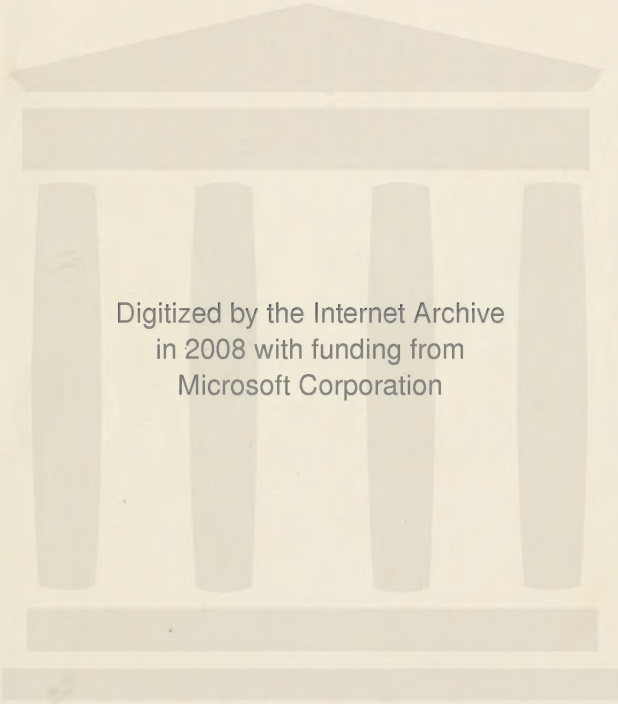


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CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

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CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

*From the Time of our Lord
till the Dawn of the Middle Ages*

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Supérieur du Grand Séminaire de Lyon

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PREFACE

SPIRITUALITY is that part of theology which deals with Christian perfection and the ways that lead to it. *Dogmatic Theology* teaches what we should believe, *Moral Theology* what we should do or not do to avoid sin, mortal or venial, and above them both, though based upon them both, comes *Spirituality* or *Spiritual Theology*.

This, again, is divided into *Ascetic Theology* and *Mystical Theology*.

The former treats of the exercises required of aspirants to perfection. Ordinarily the soul rises to perfection by passing through three stages. First of all, it gets free from sin by penance and mortification; then it forms inner virtues by prayer and the imitation of Christ; and, lastly, it advances in the love of God till it reaches habitual union with Him. It is for us to enter the path of perfection and to traverse its stages more or less quickly. God calls us to do this, and gives us the graces needed for corresponding with His call.

It is otherwise with the extraordinary states dealt with in mystical theology—states such as mystical union with its concomitant manifestations—*i.e.*, ecstasy, visions, and revelations. The mark of these states is their independence of those who experience them. They are the privilege of the few to whom God unites Himself ineffably by flooding them with light and love. No one can effect these mystical phenomena within himself by any efforts or merits of his own. The soul of the ascetic with the help of grace makes an effort to rise towards God; but the soul of the mystic is suddenly and impetuously visited by God without exerting any activity beyond that of receiving and enjoying the Divine gift.¹

Here I have merely sought to summarize the ascetic and mystical spirituality of the early Church from the days of her birth to the beginning of the tenth century. The riches of Christian antiquity are too ample to attempt any detailed account of them. My aim is rather to make the early authors known, to set forth their teaching in their own words at sufficient length to give a definite idea of it, and to group

¹ Some writers make no absolute distinction between asceticism and mysticism. They say that any Christian who is in earnest in striving after perfection is called to mystical union apart from its accessory manifestations (ecstasies, visions). Early Christian writers certainly did not distinguish asceticism from mysticism, and the word *mysticism* is not usually employed by them as defined in the text above. But they knew well that extraordinary states were the privilege of a few only. Men of letters and philosophers use the word "mystical" in a totally different sense from that of the theologians—*i.e.*, for "very religious."

together and describe the various ascetic and mystical doctrines taught in each of the periods under review.

Following the chronological order, I have synthesized the spiritual teaching of the New Testament, the divine code of asceticism, that of the Apostolic Fathers, and then that of the monks of the fourth and fifth centuries. Next come the Pelagian controversies, which had a considerable influence upon asceticism, and gave rise to some extent to the admirable spirituality of St. Augustine, the most living expression of his soul. At the close of the Patristic Era the monachism of the West makes extraordinary strides, and St. Benedict of Nursia and numbers of monastic legislators compress their ascetic teaching into their Rules. In the East, at the dawn of the Middle Ages, monastic institutions acquire their final form according to the Rule of St. Basil, and bring forth a swarm of hagiographers and spiritual writers, many of whom are still celebrated.

Christian piety gains incalculably by contact with these venerable writers, who began by applying to themselves the ascetic principles which they afterwards imparted to others in their books.

The exposition of their teaching is interspersed with numerous quotations. These throw light upon the thought of the writers, which is always weakened by summarizing it, and this book thus becomes a sort of *Enchiridion Spirituale* for those who are unable to refer to the originals. But summary and quotations together cannot give the same impression as the originals themselves. May this work kindle in many a desire to read them and to cull from the early authors a far higher spirituality than is to be found in most modern treatises!

This volume will be followed (D.V.) by two others: *Christian Spirituality from St. Bernard to St. Francis de Sales*, and *Christian Spirituality from St. Francis de Sales till To-day*.

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CHAPTER I

THE ASCETIC TEACHING OF JESUS AND THE APOSTLES

IN this synthetic study to give any complete exposition of the spiritual teaching of the New Testament is out of the question. It is impossible to cram into the compass of a few pages those divine teachings upon the riches of which souls eager for perfection have fed in the past and will feed until the end of time. Here it will suffice to set forth the fundamental principles of the spirituality bequeathed to us by Jesus and the Apostles, running through in order the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of St. John and the Epistles, especially the Epistles of St. Paul.

I.—THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

OUR Saviour did not put forward His ascetic teaching in didactic form; He addressed it to His hearers, as He did the rest of His Gospel, as circumstances required. The Evangelists made no attempt to gather it together. Indeed, they sometimes even set the counsels of perfection, given by Jesus, side by side with the precepts dealing with the Christian's essential duties. But Catholic tradition has definitely distinguished between those words of the Master which deal with asceticism, with Christian perfection, and those which have to do with evangelical morality.

The whole of the ascetic doctrine of the Gospel is summed up in these words of Jesus Christ :

“ If any man will come after Me (*i.e.*, will be My disciple), let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”¹

The Christian life and, *a fortiori*, the perfect life consist in two fundamental and correlative dispositions, each of which calls for the other, unable to exist without each other, which should inspire all our acts : (1) the renunciation of self ; (2) the firm determination to follow or imitate Christ. To become more and more detached from everything within or around us which is contrary to the good, and to follow Jesus as closely as possible, such is the rule of perfection. We belong to Jesus so far as we renounce ourselves, and the more detached we are from ourselves the more we are His.

The necessity for renunciation expressed by the powerful image “ to bear one's cross ” finds its justification in the fact that since the fall man has had to fight against the unruly

¹ Luke ix, 23. Cf. Matt. xvi, 24; Mark viii, 34.

propensities of his corrupt nature. But it is not only within himself that man discovers foes. Outwardly he finds himself at war with the suggestions of the world and the devil,¹ and to these he must offer an energetic opposition, in which vigilance and prayer will furnish his best weapons.² Jesus Christ's attitude with regard to temptations,³ which He indeed had no reason to dread, shows the faithful how they must behave on dangerous occasions if they are to emerge from the struggle as victors.

Christian renunciation has different degrees. In all it should go far enough to turn one away from that disorderly love of creatures which constitutes grievous sin. But we shall see how very far it is pushed by those whom God calls to evangelical perfection.

We can easily understand that he who would be perfect must renounce things that are *lawful*, and not only those that are *forbidden*. To abstain solely from that which is condemned by the law of Christ, under pain of grave sin, is to show regard for the precepts of evangelical morality, and to make sure of the minimum of Christian life which is absolutely necessary for salvation, but it is not a pursuit of perfection.

Jesus Himself made clear the distinction between the essential renunciation which is binding upon all and that which is required of followers after perfection. One day a rich young man met and accosted Him thus :

" Good Master, what shall I do that I may receive life everlasting? And Jesus answered him : If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He said unto Him : Which? And Jesus said : *Thou shalt do no murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Honour thy father and thy mother. And : Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* The young man saith to Him : All these have I kept from my youth. What is yet wanting to me? And Jesus, looking on him, loved him and said to him : If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. And come follow Me."⁴

The possession of worldly goods, when kept within the bounds of justice, is lawful. Nevertheless he who, like the young man in the Gospel story, feels higher aspirations and hears the divine call is invited to renounce them.

Nor is worldly wealth the only thing that must be left behind. Evangelical perfection further demands detachment from one's family, one's self, and one's own life also ; the cross has to be taken up and the footsteps of Jesus must be followed

¹ Matt. xviii, 7. Cf. Luke viii, 12.

² Mark xiv, 38.

³ Cf. Matt. iv, 1-11; Mark i, 12, 13; Luke iv, 1-13.

⁴ The passages quoted will be found in Matt. xix, 16-21; Mark x, 17-31; Luke xviii, 18-30.

Ascetic Teaching of Jesus and the Apostles 3

even to the death, if need be, whither He Himself went. Thus the renunciation of things permitted is to be *universal*, an all-round renunciation.

"And there went great multitudes with Him. And turning, He said to them: If any man come to Me, and hate not (Matt. x. 37 gives: He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me) his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."¹

He who would follow the Saviour in the path of perfection without such a degree of renunciation as this would be like—the comparisons are those of Jesus Himself—a man who proposed to build a tower without calculating whether his means sufficed to finish it, or a king who rashly declared war without first comparing his forces with those of his enemy.² "So likewise," says the Master, "every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be My disciple."³

Such detachment as this is seen to involve the practice of perfect chastity. To abstain from matrimony for the sake of living a life of continence is a sacrifice to be accepted by those who would follow out to the full the counsels of perfection of Jesus Christ.⁴ They thus put themselves upon a higher and more holy plane of life, as was laid down by the Council of Trent,⁵ and can walk in the footsteps of our Lord without let or hindrance. But this counsel only concerns a small minority of Christians, those who have received the gift of perfect chastity. For says Jesus: All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given.⁶

Lastly, this universal renunciation to which Jesus invites His specially beloved must be *de facto*. To attain to the highest degree of evangelical perfection it is not enough to be detached in heart from the things of this world; they must be abandoned in fact. Such is indeed the sense of the passages above quoted.⁷ This absolute detachment is what was practised by Jesus Himself. From the Crib to Calvary He lived in an unceasing renunciation of all that is earthly: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests," He says, "but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."⁸ On the cross He carried renunciation to the utmost limit of perfection.

Of His Apostles Jesus demanded a like detachment.

¹ Luke xiv, 25-27; Matt. x, 37, 38.

² *Id.*, 33.

³ Sess. XXIV, Can. 10.

⁴ St. Jerome, *Ep.* CXXX, *ad Demetriadem*, 14: "The height of the apostolate and the zenith of perfection is to sell all and give to the poor, and then free from all ties to rise heavenwards to Christ." *Cf.* St. Ambrose, *De officiis minist.*, I, c. xi.

⁵ Luke ix, 58. *Cf.* Matt. viii, 20.

⁶ Luke xiv, 28-32.

⁷ Matt. xix, 11, 12.

⁸ Matt. xix, 11.

"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men," He says to Peter and Andrew as they were casting their nets into the sea. And they immediately left their nets and followed Him. In the same way He called James and John as they were mending their nets in a boat with their father Zebedee, and "they forthwith left their nets and father and followed Him."¹ The publican Levi was seated at the receipt of custom when Jesus saw him and called him to follow Him, "and leaving all things, he rose up and followed Him."²

Our divine Master does not want men to hesitate about leaving all to become His disciples. Hesitation is a mark of inaptitude for evangelical perfection.

"Follow Me," says Jesus to a man whom He once met. And the man answered: "Lord, suffer me first to go and to bury my father. And Jesus said to him: Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another said: I will follow Thee, Lord; but let me first take my leave of them that are at my house. Jesus said to him: No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God."³

It was this prompt and absolute detachment, demanded of the Apostles and those who wanted to follow Jesus to the end, that made St. Peter say to his Master with a kind of pride: "Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee: what therefore shall we have?"⁴ And the Saviour replied by pointing to the reward reserved for the Apostles and those who had followed their example in quitting everything for the love of Him: "Amen, I say to you, that you, who have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting."⁵

Many a saint in his desire truly to imitate his divine Master has given practical effect to such an all-round renunciation. St. Antony the Great, after hearing the words spoken by Jesus to the rich young man read in church, sold all that he had, gave what it fetched to the poor, and withdrew into the desert.⁶ How many Christians have done the same! The *Poverello* of Assisi pushed detachment as far as it is possible for a human being to push it, and realized to the letter the whole scheme of evangelical perfection. Lastly, the renuncia-

¹ Matt. iv, 18-22.

² Luke v, 27; Matt. ix, 9; Mark ii, 13. See also the instructions as to poverty given to the Apostles and disciples on their being sent out in Matt. x, 9, 10; Luke x, 4, 5.

³ Luke ix, 59-62.

⁴ Matt. xix, 27.

⁵ *Id.* 28, 29.

⁶ St. Athanasius, *Vita S. Antonii*, 2 (P.G. XXVI, 841).

tion counselled in the Gospel has found its traditional expression, officially approved by the Church, in the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which constitute the very essence of the religious state which is embraced by so many of the faithful who have been called to the closest following of Jesus. We may leave to unbelieving expositors their desperate attempts to discover some naturalistic explanation of the ascetic teaching of the Gospel. They cannot understand why Jesus came to counsel so absolute a detachment. Very much to the point is the familiar passage from St. Paul: "The sensual man (*i.e.*, he who has not the light of faith) perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand it."¹ But as for ourselves, we need not be the least surprised that evangelical perfection should be so high; rather should we be astonished at the contrary. By His example and His teaching Jesus set before the world a supreme ideal of perfection, an ideal which is fully attained by the few only, an ideal which will be surpassed by none.

In closing this brief sketch of the doctrine of evangelical renunciation, a reply must be given to a question which naturally comes to mind.

Evangelical perfection appears to be within the reach of a very small number of persons. Christians living in the world—and these form the vast majority—cannot renounce all that they possess in fact. What would become of society if all men followed the counsels of the Gospel to the letter? Must we conclude that Jesus excluded the mass of Christians from perfection to make it the privilege of only a few? Spiritual writers, on the other hand, and particularly St. Francis of Sales, teach that wherever we may be and whatever our calling, "we can and ought to aspire to the life of perfection."²

We answer that evangelical perfection, in its highest degree, so far as it implies a renunciation that is universal and *de facto*, is surely the privilege of but a small number of people. Jesus lets this be clearly understood on many occasions, especially with regard to perfect chastity.

But a lower degree of perfection which does not demand the actual renunciation of worldly goods is within the reach of all and no one is excluded from it. This perfection, which may be called *common*, is satisfied with an inward renunciation of one's family and of this world's goods. It means that one must have the *will* to put the love of Jesus before every lawful earthly affection, and to leave one's possessions, relations, and all things, if such a total renunciation be demanded of us by

¹ 1 Cor. ii, 14. ² *Introduction à la Vie Dévote*, 1^{re} part., ch. iii.

God. "We must quit all," says Bossuet, "in affection, in desire, in resolution; I mean by an invincible determination to become attached to nothing, to seek no support except in God alone. . . . Happy . . . are they who are able to carry out this desire to the end, to carry it out in practice . . . to a final, actual, and perfect renunciation. . . . But all Christians are bound to carry it out to the end, at least in heart, really, as under the eyes of God; to possess as though not possessing, to be married as though unmarried, to use this world as though using it not, as though not of it, as though not in it."¹

In the *Sermon on the Mount* our Saviour declares, indeed, that those are blessed who are poor in spirit.² This spirit of poverty, this inward detachment from all that is not God, is compatible with the actual possession of worldly goods; but it may nevertheless carry the soul very far along the ways of sanctity. This renunciation in spirit of the things of earth united with a constantly increasing fervour of charity constitutes the Christian perfection to which everyone is called. This is the renunciation which St. Francis of Sales lays down for those living in the world who "aspire to the devout life."³

Renunciation alone could not be the whole of perfection; its indispensable correlative is union with Jesus by love and by imitating His virtues. We only renounce all in order to follow our Saviour. The Apostles left all solely to become attached to their Master. Christian doctrine, by contrast with that of the Stoics, does not make of renunciation an end in itself; it makes it a condition of the love of God. The latter makes progress in the soul in direct proportion to its detachment. The more complete the *abneget seipsum*, the more perfect will be the *sequatur me*.

The true disciple follows his Master closer than the ordinary Christian; for he is within the circle of His intimate friends, and takes a larger share in His trials and persecutions. "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake: be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."⁴

Perfection implies above all a more rigorous imitation of the love of Jesus for the heavenly Father and for one's neighbour. All the law and also all perfection depend upon the two commandments to love God and to love one's neighbour. "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" asked a doctor of the law; and "Jesus said to him: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and*

¹ *Méditation sur l'Évangile*, La Cène, 1^{re} part., 83^e jour.

² Matt. v, 3.

³ Cf. *Vie Dévote*, 3^e part., ch. xiv to xvi.

⁴ Matt. v, 11, 12. Cf. Luke vi, 22, 23.

with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like to this: *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets."¹

St. Francis of Sales, following St. Thomas,² teaches that charity, ardent and fervent charity, is of the very essence of perfection.³ The Bishop of Geneva does but re-echo the teaching of the Gospel.

The love of God in the Christian finds expression in praise, in adoration, and in the desire to glorify his heavenly Father in all things: "Our Father . . . hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come. . . ."⁴ Again, it is shown in an entire conformity with the divine will, not only when it issues in commandments, but when it orders the happenings of life. In the fullest and the widest sense we must repeat Christ's words of submission in His agony in the garden of Gethsemani: "Father . . . Thy will be done!"⁵ And this resignation arising from love blossoms out into a most filial confidence in the goodness of our heavenly Father, who careth far more for His children than for the birds of the air or the flowers of the field. "I say to you," says Jesus, "be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat and the body more than the raiment? Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? . . . And for raiment why are you solicitous? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labour not, neither do they spin. But I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe: how much more you, O ye of little faith? Be not solicitous therefore, saying, What shall we eat: or, What shall we drink: or, Wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of these things. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice: and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow: for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."⁶

A prayer full of confidence rises up from the heart of the Christian who feels himself to be a child of the heavenly Father as truly as this. The Saviour promises that such prayer as this will be surely answered if it be persevered in. "I say unto you: Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For

¹ Matt. xxii, 36-40. Cf. Mark xii, 28-34.

² *Sum. Theol.* 2. 2, qu. clxxxiv, art. 1. ³ *Vie Dévote*, 1^{re} part., ch. i.

⁴ Luke xi, 2. ⁵ Matt. xxvi, 42. Cf. Matt. vi, 10. ⁶ Matt. vi, 25-34.

every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. And which of you, if he ask his father bread, will he give him a stone? Or a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he reach him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him?"¹

Prayer as perfect as this, to which Jesus bids us, puts the devout soul into the closest communion with God. It is like the prayer so often addressed by the Saviour to His Father when He withdrew into the solitude at night to pray.² And, in the case of the saints, it becomes transformed into those extraordinary states of prayer and divine love which are subjects for study in mystical theology.

Love of our neighbour makes us look upon all men as our brothers. "One is your Master," says Jesus, "and all you are brethren."³ This love in its perfection demands of us humble devotion to the service of others after the pattern of Christ, who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister."⁴ We shall also come to the help of our neighbour when in need, and do our best to render service to him in his necessities. Jesus tells us that on the Day of Judgment He will count as done to Himself whatever we have done for the least of our brethren.⁵ The charitable, following this Gospel teaching, like to see in the sick whom they visit and in the poor whom they help suffering members of the Saviour.

To how sublime a height has not love for one's neighbour thus been raised! The object of this virtue is truly divine; it is Christ who in some sort identifies Himself with our neighbour. In loving others, it is Jesus in them whom we love. The love of God and love of our neighbour form in a manner but one and the same theological virtue, and St. Thomas goes so far as to say: "The love wherewith we love God is of the same kind as that wherewith we love our neighbour!"⁶

Jesus brought the law to perfection⁷ by introducing into it the love of one's neighbour. Moreover, the position taken by His disciples with regard to one's neighbour was far higher

¹ Luke xi, 9-13. Cf. Luke xviii, 1: "We ought always to pray, and not to faint."

² Luke vi, 12; Matt. x, 1; Mark iii, 13.

³ Matt. xxiii, 8.

⁴ Matt. xx, 28.

⁵ Matt. xxv, 35-45.

⁶ *Sum. Theol.* 2. 2, qu. xxv, art. 1: *Idem specie actus est quo diligitur Deus et quo diligitur proximus, et propter hoc habitus Charitatis non solum se extendit ad dilectionem Dei, sed etiam ad dilectionem proximi.*

⁷ Cf. Matt. v, 17-19. See Rom. xiii, 8-10: "He that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law. . . . The love of our neighbour worketh no evil. Love therefore is fulfilling the law."

than that of the Jews of old. We are to forgive fully and untiringly¹ the wrongs committed by our brethren against us if we wish our heavenly Father to forgive us our trespasses against Him.² And in order to avoid all appearance of vengeance we are to practise patience and endurance to a heroic degree. "You have heard that it hath been said: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil: but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other: and if a man will contend with thee in justice and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him. And whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him other two.³ Give to him that asketh of thee: and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away."⁴

But it is not enough to forgive wrongs and to bear with ill-usage. The true disciple of Jesus Christ, following his Master's example, will love even his enemies, will pray for them, will render them every kind of service, and come to their assistance in need, thus imitating our heavenly Father, the great pattern of perfection, who maketh His sun to shine and His rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust. "You have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy. But I say to you: Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens this? Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."⁵

This love of one's neighbour, pushed to its farthest limits, will be accompanied by other Christian virtues which follow in its train: gentleness, meekness, mercifulness, virtues declared blessed by our Saviour in the *Sermon on the Mount*.⁶ Jesus insists mainly upon humility, which, by preventing us from placing ourselves above others⁷ makes our intercourse with them easy and pleasant. It brings down upon us the goodwill of God⁸ and makes us avoid ostentation in fulfilling the duties of prayer and fasting and almsgiving.⁹

¹ Matt. xviii, 21, 22.

² Matt. vi, 14, 15. Cf. v, 23, 24.

³ An allusion to the compulsory duties laid by the Romans upon the Jews by forcing them to lend their horses to the state carriers.

⁴ Matt. v, 38-42. These counsels are not so much to be taken literally as to be understood of a spiritual disposition to bear with everything from one's neighbour.

⁵ Matt. v, 43-48.

⁶ Matt. v, 3-10.

⁷ Matt. xxiii, 2-13; Luke xiv, 7-41.

⁸ Luke xviii, 9-14.

⁹ Matt. vi, 3-18.

II.—THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

THE "following of Jesus"—that is to say, being His disciple, belonging to Him, gains a fresh precision of definition in the Fourth Gospel. St. John the Apostle was led by his mystical leanings to set forth more fully than the other Evangelists the teaching of our Saviour as to the mysteries of the divine life within us. His Gospel may be termed in a certain sense the Gospel of the interior life. Therein the life-giving connections that bind the Christian soul with Jesus are described with remarkable sympathy. We may say that the conception of the life communicated by Christ to men holds the chief place in the Gospel of St. John.¹

Faith² and baptismal regeneration³ are the indispensable principles of the quickening action of Christ in the soul. It requires a close union with Jesus.

Man has two kinds of birth: a carnal birth which has the flesh as its principle and gives life to the body, and a spiritual birth which has the water and the Spirit as its principle and gives supernatural life.⁴ The faithful who believe in Christ and are regenerated by Baptism are very closely united with Jesus and incorporated in Him. They receive from Christ the divine life, as the branch receives the sap from the vine in which it abides. "I am the vine," says Jesus, "you are the branches."⁵ The branch cannot live and bear fruit if it is cut off from the vine in which it grows. So likewise is the Christian absolutely and vitally dependent upon Christ: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. . . . He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall wither: and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire: and he burneth."⁶

St. Paul expresses the same idea by using another image, that of the human body. The union of the believer with Christ is like the organic and quickening union between the head and

¹ "In Him was life" (John i, 4). "I am the resurrection and the life" (xi, 21). "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (xiv, 6). Cf. Lebreton, *Les origines du dogme de la Trinité*, p. 400. Lepin, *La valeur historique du quatrième Evangile*, II, p. 191.

² John iii, 36: "He that believeth in the Son hath life everlasting; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." Cf. vi, 43-47.

³ John iii, 5: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Cf. Mark xvi, 16.

⁴ John iii, 3-6.

⁵ John xv, 5.

⁶ John xv, 4-6.

the body of man.¹ The divine life flows down from Christ into the faithful, the members of His mystical body, in the same way as the life flows from the head to be diffused throughout the body, and as the sap comes from the vine and permeates the branches to make them grow and bear fruit. Through Christ the believer also becomes a "participator" in the divine life.²

It is to bear fruit and to do meritorious acts that the Christian receives supernatural life from Jesus. The divine Husbandman, the heavenly Father, would cut off from the mystical vine the branch that bears no fruit. But the fruitful branch is trimmed with the pruning-knife of tribulation that it may yield more fruit.³

Thus the Christian is in the most entire dependence upon Jesus Christ with regard to all that concerns the economy of the spiritual life. He is thus under the happy necessity of having to apply unceasingly to Him by constant prayer. If he gets severed from Jesus he no longer receives the life of grace, and death ensues. The more he desires to live a supernatural life, the more closely must he unite with the Saviour through feeling his own fundamental indigence.

This quickening union of Christ with the faithful, begun in faith and the grace of Baptism, finds its consummation in the Eucharist. The flesh of Jesus is food, and His blood is drink. The Eucharist is the spiritual food of the Christian; it produces in the soul effects analogous to those which material food produces in the body. The latter food becomes assimilated with the body and feeds it. By Holy Communion the Saviour is closely united with the faithful: He dwells in the believer and the believer dwells in Him. A sort of sacramental "circuminsession"⁴ is set up between Jesus and the communicant. And in this altogether extraordinary and mysterious union the supernatural life, which the manhood of Christ received from the Father, inundates the soul of the fervent believer. Thus the Eucharist is the supremely efficacious means by which the Christian is closely united with Jesus to receive life in abundance from it while waiting to participate in the resurrection in glory on the last day. "He that eateth

¹ 1 Cor. xii, 27; Eph. v, 30, etc.

² Cf. 2 Peter i, 4. St. August. *In Joann. lxxx, 1: Unius quippe naturae sunt vitis et palmites: propter quod cum esset (Verbum) Deus, cujus naturae non sumus, factus est homo, ut in illo esset vitis humana natura, cujus et nos homines palmites esse possemus.*

³ John xv, 1, 2.

⁴ *Circuminsession* is a theological term which marks the fact that the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, on account of their divine nature, indwell in one another: "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me," says Jesus (John xiv, 10). An analogous phenomenon results from the intercommunion of Christ and the Christian.

My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life : and I will raise him up in the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed : and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me : and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father : so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me."¹

It is thus that Jesus the good shepherd feedeth His sheep. Early Christian tradition rightly saw a link between the Eucharist and the Johannine allegory of the good shepherd. The pictures in the catacombs like to represent Jesus as a shepherd carrying a pail of milk, a symbol of the Eucharist. Christ came into the world not only to give His life for the sheep, and to gather them all together into one fold, the Church, but also in order to feed them with His flesh and blood and to give them life in abundance.²

The union of the faithful with Jesus by the grace of Baptism and the Eucharist conceals also other mysteries. These were revealed in the wonderful discourse addressed by the Saviour to His Apostles after the Last Supper. A part of it applies exclusively to the Apostles and the Church which it was their mission to found ; the rest refers to the personal relations of the soul of the Christian with God. These relations are so perfect that they ensure a permanent presence in the soul of the divine person of Jesus and of the two other Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

The sacramental union of the communicant with Jesus is transitory, whereas the union effected by divine love, by grace, is lasting. Jesus dwells within the Christian. "I will not leave you orphans : I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world seeth Me no more. But you see Me : because I live, and you shall live. In that day you shall know that I am in My Father : and you in Me, and I in you."³ . . . Abide in Me : and I in you."⁴

These intimate relations of mutual love are compared by Jesus with those which rule between the Father and Himself. "As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall abide

¹ John vi, 54-58. "Here is to be understood not only a moral union founded upon a communion of feelings, but a real physical union, implying a blending of two lives, or rather a participation in the very life of Christ by the Christian" (Lebreton, *Les origines du dogme de la Trinité*, p. 403. Lepin, *l.c.*).

² John x, 10, 11 : "I am come that they (*i.e.*, My sheep) may have life and may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep."

³ John xiv, 18-20. "We must admit, I think, that here Jesus Christ in foretelling His coming does not intend to speak of His glorious appearances nor of His *parousia* on the last day ; what He promises to His disciples is to be present within them with a quickening presence which the world knoweth not" (Lebreton, *id.* p. 425).

⁴ John xv, 4.

Ascetic Teaching of Jesus and the Apostles 13

in My love : as I also have kept My Father's commandments and do abide in His love."¹

By Jesus the believer also is united with the Father, for the Father comes with Jesus to abide in the soul of the just who keeps God's commandments by love. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them; he it is that loveth Me. And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father : and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him. . . . If anyone love Me, he will keep My word. And My Father will love him : and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him."²

A kind of mystical association is set up between the soul of the Christian and the Father and the Son, a truly divine *consortium*, by which the believer is in intimate communion with the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.³ For the Holy Spirit, too, comes to dwell in the soul of the faithful keeper of Christ's commandments.⁴ "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father : and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever : the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, nor knoweth Him. But you shall know Him, because He shall abide with you and shall be in you."⁵

The soul of the Christian, now a temple of the Holy Trinity, is in a manner made divine.⁶ It does acts which are truly meritorious for life eternal. God the Father regards Christians as His children, He confers upon them the love which He has for His Son,⁷ and answers the prayers made in His name.⁸ The glory of Jesus Christ is reflected upon them, and a day will come when they will be in heaven with Him.⁹ Meanwhile on earth the world will persecute them as it has persecuted Jesus Himself.¹⁰

Who could recount the mystical impulses arising in souls captured by divine love through meditation upon these teachings of Jesus Christ? And how readily do we understand as we read these sublime passages the singular attraction of the Gospel of St. John for those who are devoted to the interior

¹ *Id.* xv, 9-10. Cf. 1 John iv, 16.

² John xiv, 21, 23.

³ Cf. 1 John i, 3 : "That you may also have fellowship with us, and our fellowship may be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Calmes, *L'Evangile selon S. Jean*, 1904, pp. 390-400.

⁴ The keeping of the commandments for the love of Jesus is the condition required for all the wonders wrought in the soul of the just man (John xiv, 15; xv, 14; xiv, 24). Cf. 1 John v, 3 : "For this is the charity of God : that we keep His commandments."

⁵ John xiv, 15-17.

⁶ 2 Pet. i, 4 : "that you may be partakers of the divine nature."

⁷ John xvii, 26; xvi, 27. Cf. 1 John iii, 1 : "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God."

⁸ John xvi, 23-27.

⁹ John xvii, 24.

¹⁰ *Id.*, xv, 18-26; xvi, 1-4; 19-20.

life! These inspired teachings give us a lofty idea of the dignity of the Christian, and make us realize how holy his life should be.

A disciple of Christ, who is "the light of the world,"¹ the believer is a "child of light."² He will walk no more in the darkness of error and evil, but in the light of truth and virtue. He will not go back to his former low levels by living in a manner unworthy of his condition, which would mean flying from the light. "For every one that doth evil hateth the light and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved. But he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest : because they are done in God."³

With the love of God the disciple of Christ will unite the love of his neighbour. The commandment to love one another, "the new commandment," was given by Jesus the night before He left His Apostles, and He puts it in the front rank. He reverts to it on many occasions. "A new commandment I give unto you : That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another."⁴

"The love of one's neighbour, as Jesus understands it, differs from that of the Jews not only in its breadth and intensity, but also in its nature; it is quite a different affection from any till then known by the world, a love arising from a supernatural principle, a mystical bond by which the souls of men are to be joined together to make one spiritual family; in a word, it is Christian charity. To love our neighbour in Christ and for Christ, such is the commandment of the New Law, such is the object of the 'new commandment.' Furthermore, charity is to be the characteristic and distinctive mark of the disciple of Jesus Christ."⁵ And it is the infinitely close union existing between the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity that is given by Jesus as the pattern and the bond of union between Christians: "Father . . . that they may be one, as We also are one."⁶

The teaching of Jesus as to the love of God and one's neighbour is admirably commented on by St. John himself, the Apostle of divine love, in his first Epistle.

He teaches that we ought to love God because He first loved us, and testified His love by giving up His Son to die for our salvation. This is the great motive for charity towards God.

¹ John vii, 12; i, 4-9; ix, 5; xii, 46. Cf. Lepin, *id.*, II, p. 185.

² *Id.*, xii, 35, 36.

³ *Id.*, iii, 20, 21.

⁴ John xiii, 34, 35. Cf. xv, 12, 17.

⁵ Calmes, *L'Evangile selon S. Jean*, p. 384.

⁶ John xvii, 22.

"God is charity. By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we may live by Him. In this is charity : not as though we had loved God, but because He hath first loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins."¹

The fruits of divine love are first of all the indwelling of God in our souls,² and next confidence, the most perfect of its kind, a child's confidence that excludes all servile fear. "In this is the charity of God perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgement. . . . Fear is not in charity : but perfect charity casteth out fear, because fear hath pain. And he that feareth is not perfected in charity. Let us therefore love God : because God hath first loved us."³

The sign whereby we may know whether we love God, if we have charity within us, is the keeping of His commandments, particularly the commandment to believe in Jesus and to love our brethren. "My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth. . . . And this is His commandment : That we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He hath given commandment unto us. . . .⁴ If any man say : I love God, and hateth his brother ; he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?"⁵

The practice of brotherly charity is even a mark of predestination, a sure pledge that the life of grace is within us. "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in himself. . . .⁶ He that loveth his brother abideth in the light : and there is no scandal in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness."⁷

No more beautiful pages have been written on the love of God and of our neighbour than those that came from the pen of St. John. The beloved Apostle profited more than the other disciples through His divine Master's love for him. Moreover, he shows greater acuteness in noting the loving sayings which form part of the Gospel message, and he reports them more fully. These words of love inspired his own life in an eminent degree, and he strongly urges the first Christians to live in

¹ 1 John iv, 9, 10. Cf. John iii, 16 : "God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son."

² 1 John iv, 16. Cf. iv, 12, 13.

³ 1 John iv, 17-19. Cf. iii, 19-24.

⁴ 1 John iii, 18-23. Cf. ii, 4-6.

⁵ 1 John iv, 20. Cf. 2 John 6 : "And this is charity : That we walk according to His commandments."

⁶ 1 John iii, 14, 15.

⁷ 1 John ii, 10, 11.

their spirit, as his Epistles testify. St. John is the personification of charity, and we can well understand how in his extreme old age he was never tired of repeating to the faithful of Ephesus: "My little children, love one another. This is the Lord's commandment: if you keep it, that is enough."¹

III.—THE TEACHING OF ST. PAUL

ST. PAUL, in accordance with the teaching of Jesus, enforces the two great laws of the spiritual life: the mortification of evil propensities, the *abneget seipsum*, and a life in constant union with Jesus Christ, who is to be the rule of our thoughts, feelings, and actions, *et sequatur me*.

St. John's Gospel declares the necessity of spiritual regeneration in Baptism in order to participate in the divine life with Jesus Christ, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit."² St. Paul draws forth this teaching of Christ, and from it deduces his entire notion of Christian life, in which the spirit is likewise opposed to the flesh.³

Baptism regenerates man, transforms him, creates a new being within him, and incorporates him into Christ.⁴ It makes him participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and grafts him into Christ, who died and rose again. "Know you not that all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in His death? For we are buried together with Him by baptism into death: that, as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer."⁵

The baptismal waters in which the newly converted believer is completely immersed⁶ in order to cleanse him from all

¹ St. Jerome, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, iii, 6 (P.L. XXVI, 433).

² John iii, 6.

³ "As to the spirit and the flesh, the teaching of St. Paul differs from that of St. John by laying more stress upon concupiscence, the tendency to evil, whereas in St. John, as in the Old Testament, the flesh appears rather as an infirmity and as nothingness" (Lebreton, *id.*, p. 419, note 2. See Lepin, *id.*, II, p. 177).

⁴ 2 Cor. v, 17; Eph. ii, 10, 15, 22; Gal. vi, 15.

⁵ Rom. vi, 3-6.

⁶ In the days of St. Paul and in the early ages of the Church, Baptism was usually administered by immersion. The candidate for Baptism was plunged entirely in the water by him who administered the sacrament. It is the baptismal ceremony that suggests to St. Paul his teaching as to the Christian life.

defilement symbolize the death of Christ and the tomb in which He was buried. The neophyte emerging from the baptismal laver in which he has gathered a new life which he is never to lose, represents Christ coming forth from the grave, alive with a new and immortal life. The baptismal rite, effecting what it signifies, thus works in us a death unto sin, the crucifixion and destruction of the old man buried in the water as Christ was in the grave; it also works a new life, the new man regenerated in the likeness of the risen Christ.

Unlike the death of the body, death unto sin and incorporation into Christ may be more or less complete. For in the Christian there are two component and opposed parts, the flesh and the spirit; in him are, as it were, two men who fight one another as enemies, the old man and the new. With the help of grace the Christian has to make the spirit triumph over the flesh, the new man over the old. Salvation depends upon winning this victory. Christian life, and the degree of perfection attained by everyone, are measured by the increase of the spirit with regard to the flesh, of the new man as compared with the old.

Hence, to set forth the spiritual teaching of St. Paul is: (1) to describe his conception of the flesh, the old man, and to show its opposition to the spirit, the new man; (2) to explain what constitutes the spirit, the new man; (3) to point out the ascetic and mystical consequences of the connections between the spirit, the new man, and the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

1. *The Flesh and the Old Man—The Christian Combat.*

The flesh, so far as we are here concerned,¹ "is (human) nature as it actually exists, vitiated by sin, infected by concupiscence."² It means man in the state wherein he was left by original sin. The tainted flesh, or concupiscence, becomes in turn the source of personal sins. It is also a principle of death, in constant rebellion against the spirit, and the will by itself without grace is powerless to hold it in check. Listen to the groanings of St. Paul in regard thereto: "For I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. For to will is present with me: but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good which I will, I do not: but the evil which I will not, that I do. Now if I do

¹ See the different senses of the word "flesh" given by Prat, *La théologie de S. Paul*, II, pp. 105-108.

² Prat, *id.*, p. 107. "If *spirit* stands for every man as he is restored by grace, *flesh* signifies every man as he is impaired by sin" (Prat, *id.*, p. 100). The words "body" (*σῶμα*), "flesh" (*σαρξ*), sense-soul (*ψυχή*), in the writings of St. Paul generally have a derogatory sense. They denote man's nature corrupted by sin. They are opposed to the word "spirit" (*πνεῦμα*), which usually denotes man regenerated by grace.

that which I will not, it is no more I that do it : but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man : but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"¹

The "works of the flesh" are sin, and finally death eternal; "the wisdom of the flesh is an enemy of God. For it is not subject to the law of God : neither can it be."² The "fruits of the Spirit," on the contrary, are "life and peace."³ The Christian, regenerated in Christ by Baptism, ought not to live any more according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, otherwise he will not inherit the kingdom of God. "Brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die : but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live."⁴ "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."⁵

The work of the Christian consists in the constant mortification of the flesh in order to give life to the spirit, in stripping himself more and more completely of the old man which was "crucified" with Christ in Baptism in order to put on the new man. You have been taught, writes St. Paul to the Ephesians, "to put off, according to former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind : and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth."⁶ The evil tendencies of our fallen nature, although destroyed indeed in principle in Baptism, are incessantly springing up afresh. St. Paul on every page of his Epistles recommends Christians to check them and to make it impossible for them to do any harm.⁷ He says of himself : "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection : lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway."⁸

The flesh is opposed to the spirit, the old man to the new ; and the Christian has to secure the victory of the spirit over the flesh, of the new man over the old. Thus the state of the disciple of Jesus Christ is that of a fighter.

And indeed to St. Paul the Christian life is a combat. "I

¹ Rom. vii, 18-24. Cf. Gal. v, 17.

² Rom. viii, 7.

³ Gal. v, 21 ; Rom. viii, 6.

⁴ Rom. viii, 12, 13.

⁵ Gal. v, 24, 25.

⁶ Eph. iv, 22-24. Cf. Col. iii, 9, 10.

⁷ Rom. viii, 13 ; Gal. v, 24 ; Col. iii, 5 ; 2 Cor. iv, 10.

⁸ 1 Cor. ix, 27.

have fought a good fight,"¹ he said at the end of his life. He exhorts his friend Timothy to fight in the same way "the good fight of faith," and to "lay hold on eternal life."² Our Saviour Himself declares that the kingdom of heaven must be taken with violence, and that "the violent" bear it away.³

In his first Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul compares the Christian to an athlete in the public games,⁴ to the wrestler, so popular with the Greeks, who strives for a "corruptible crown," and does not shrink from submitting to strict training to give his body the necessary strength and suppleness. We who strive for an "incorruptible crown" must therefore not fear to be hard upon our bodies to make sure of victory.

Nor have we to strive against ourselves only, but also against the devil, the great tempter who continues to seduce men⁵ as he seduced Eve by his cunning.⁶ St. Paul puts Christians on their guard against Satan and his tools, and taking a suggestion from the equipment of the Roman soldier, gives a striking image to describe the spiritual arms which must be used in the fight. "Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood: but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. Therefore, take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of justice: and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God)."⁷

Another enemy conspires along with the devil against the Christian, and this is the world, or the mass of men whose spirit is opposed to the Spirit of God,⁸ which is inspired with a spirit of disobedience and lives according to the lusts of the flesh.⁹ The Apostle St. John, too, declares that "all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world."¹⁰ Upon this passage is based the

¹ 2 Tim. iv, 7.

² 1 Tim. vi, 12.

³ Matt. xi, 12.

⁴ 1 Cor. ix, 25.

⁵ 1 Thess. iii, 5. Cf. Prat, II, p. 111 ff.

⁶ 2 Cor. xi, 3.

⁷ Eph. vi, 11-17. St. Peter gave similar advice to the faithful: "Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist ye, strong in faith" (1 Pet. v, 8).

⁸ 1 Cor. ii, 12. Cf. Prat, II, p. 158 ff.

⁹ Eph. ii, 1-3.

¹⁰ 1 John ii, 16.

doctrine of the threefold concupiscence, which holds such a fundamental place in spirituality.

Therefore the Christian must "not love the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him."¹ The Christian's motto must be that of St. Paul: "The world is crucified to me, and I to the world."²

In his desperate and perpetual struggle with the enemies of his salvation the Christian must possess confidence. He will meet with no temptation "above that which he is able"³ to bear when his strength is sustained by grace. St. Paul reminds the Corinthians of this to encourage them in the fight, and to urge them to put up a victorious resistance against the seductions of evil. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it."⁴

This quotation from St. Paul sheds a ray of consolation upon the mystery of temptation. However great may be his fury against us, the tempter can only touch us so far as God allows. And if we are faithful in "prayer without ceasing"⁵ we shall be strong enough to repel all assaults.

The fight with the devil and the world and the mortification of the flesh will be carried all the farther the more intense the Christian life and the greater the desire for perfection. There is the mortification that is strictly necessary to avoid sins which prevent our "obtaining the kingdom of God."⁶ There is also the mortification which is able to renounce what is lawful, a mortification put into practice by those who are enamoured of an ideal of sanctity above the common. To such as these St. Paul commends virginity. "Now, concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord: but I give counsel, as having obtained mercy of the Lord, to be faithful. I think therefore that this is good for the present necessity: that it is good for a man so to be."⁷

Marriage is good and lawful; nevertheless virginity is better. It enables one to belong to God without division and to give oneself to lengthened prayer. "He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord: how he may please God. But he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world: how he may please his wife. And he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord: that she may be holy in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world: how she may please her husband."⁸

St. Paul gives a definite interpretation of the mind of Jesus

¹ *Id.*, ii, 15.

² Gal. vi, 14.

³ 1 Cor. x, 13.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ 1 Thess. v, 17.

⁶ Gal. v, 21.

⁷ 1 Cor. vii, 25, 26.

⁸ *Id.*, 32-34.

Christ as to virginity, and throws into strong relief the excellence of that state. The author of the Apocalypse, too, exalts virginity. He sees the Lamb of God in heaven surrounded by virgins who follow Him wherever He goes; and there he also hears the new canticle which none but virgins can sing.¹

This apostolic teaching on the subject of virginity wins immense favour in all the ages that come after, and determines a great number of Christians to embrace the state of celibacy, in which the victory of the spirit over the flesh is singularly striking.

2. *The Spirit, the New Man—Their relationship to the Holy Spirit and to Jesus Christ.*

The spirit which rises in the Christian out of the ruins of the flesh and the old man, is, according to St. Paul, man regenerated and restored by the grace of Baptism. "The old man and the new are two consecutive states of the same person, first given over to the influences of sin of which Adam is the origin, and then to the state of grace of which Jesus Christ is the dispenser. . . . The new man is the same in meaning as the spirit, and the old man corresponds with the flesh."² . . . The spirit and the flesh, in the moral sense which is characteristic of the theology of St. Paul, comprise the whole man from different points of view: the spirit stands for man under the influence of the Holy Spirit; the flesh stands for man without the Holy Spirit."³

This idea of the spirit, the new man, according to St. Paul, will be further defined by a study of the relations which unite the Christian regenerated in Baptism to the Holy Spirit and to Jesus Christ. It is here that we shall discover all the wealth and beauty of the spiritual doctrine of the great Apostle.

Man in Baptism is incorporated into Christ; he becomes a member of His mystical body, which is the Church. Now, the Holy Spirit, according to St. Paul, is to the Church what the soul is to man's body.⁴ He is present in her, quickens her, and makes her bring forth supernatural fruits. The Holy Spirit is likewise the soul of our souls. He dwells in us and sanctifies us, and makes us act in a supernatural manner with a view to eternal life.

St. John teaches us that the Holy Spirit abides in the souls of the just along with the Father and the Son. St. Paul

¹ Apoc. xiv, 1-5: "And they sung as it were a new canticle . . . and no man could say the canticle but those . . . who were not defiled with women for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

² Prat, *La théologie de S. Paul*, II, p. 102.

³ *Id.*, p. 104.

⁴ 1 Cor. xii, 13.

similarly declares that the believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that therefore the Christian must keep himself in the greatest purity. "Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, whom you have from God : and you are not your own? Fly fornication."¹

The Holy Spirit takes possession of our souls, He moves them, He guides them and helps them to overcome the temptations of the flesh. He it is, too, who bears witness to us of our sonship by adoption, and makes us call God our Father with confidence : "For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die : but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live. For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear : but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons whereby we cry : Abba (Father). For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God."²

Again, it is the Holy Spirit who teaches us to pray. "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings."³ And these prayers, being always in conformity with what it behoves us to ask, are accepted by God.

Thus the divine Guest within us is not inactive. He constantly prompts us to do good and to the practice of Christian virtues. "His action includes all Christians and all manifestations of the supernatural life, from baptismal regeneration to eternal happiness. To obey the promptings of grace is commonly called 'walking according to the Spirit, being led by the Spirit';⁴ the sum-total of virtue is the 'fruit of the Spirit';⁵ all that raises us above our carnal nature . . . all that surrounds us with a divine atmosphere, all that transforms us into 'spiritual' beings, according to a favourite expression of St. Paul, receives the general name of 'spirit,'⁶ thus alluding to the source from which it springs."⁷

We are called upon not to resist the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and not to "grieve" Him.⁸

If the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church, Jesus Christ is the Church's head. The quickening activity of the head, according to St. Paul, is not inferior to that of the soul, and

¹ 1 Cor. vi, 19, 18. Cf. iii, 16 : "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" The three divine Persons dwell in the Christian (2 Cor. vi, 16 ; 1 Cor. iii, 17), but St. Paul attributes the work of our sanctification to the action of the Holy Spirit within us.

² Rom. viii, 13-16. Cf. viii, 9-11 ; 2 Tim. i, 14.

³ Rom. viii, 26.

⁴ Rom. viii, 4, 14.

⁵ Gal. v, 22.

⁶ 1 Cor. xiv, 14-16 ; 2 Cor. iv, 13 ; Gal. vi, 1, etc.

⁷ Prat, *id.*, II, p. 420.

⁸ Eph. iv, 30 : "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

Ascetic Teaching of Jesus and the Apostles 23

Christ, just as the Holy Spirit does, sanctifies the Church and each of her individual members.

Baptism effects a very close union between Jesus and the Christian, a union compared by St. Paul to that between the head¹ and the members in man's body; compared also to the graft which inwardly mingles two lives, that of the stem with that of the branch grafted into it.² St. John, too, likened this union to that of the vine with its branches. Thus are Christ and ourselves "animated with the same vital principle (*σύμφυτοι*)," and "subject to the same principle of action (*σύμμορφοι*)." We have "put on Christ,"³ we are "rooted and built up in Him,"⁴ as St. Paul says, and we live with the same life as He does.⁵

This common life assimilates the Christian to Jesus; it makes of him, in truth, another Christ. All that takes place in Jesus is reproduced in the believer, just as in the human body the head reacts upon the members, and as in the graft the closest solidarity exists between the branch and the stock into which it is grafted.

This union that binds us to Jesus is such that the mysteries of our Saviour's life are spiritually reproduced in us, and especially the mysteries of His death and resurrection and ascension.

Baptism baptizes us into the death of Christ to make us die unto sin.⁶

Jesus took upon His mortal and innocent flesh all the sins of men. He put to death upon the cross that "flesh in the likeness of sinful flesh,"⁷ and buried it in the grave to destroy sin together with it. "The sinless flesh of our Saviour, in the likeness of sinful flesh, was delivered into the hands of tormentors to deal with at their will. They smote it, and their blows fell upon sin; they crucified it, and sin was crucified; they took away its life, and sin was slain."⁸ The risen Christ stripped Himself of His mortal flesh, the symbol of sin and of the old man, on which hung all the sins of mankind; He put on a glorious body, and He lives with a new life. Thus it is that, according to St. Paul, the death of Jesus "was a death unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God."⁹

We, too, must look upon ourselves, like our Saviour, as "dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord."¹⁰ A mystical death, like the bloody death of the Crucified Jesus, is supernaturally wrought in us in the regeneration of Baptism. It has destroyed sin in us. Our sinful flesh, the

¹ Col. i, 18; Eph. i, 22; i, 15; v, 23; Col. ii, 10, 18; 1 Cor. xii, 12.

² Rom. vi, 5; xi, 17-24. ³ Gal. iii, 27; Eph. iv, 24; Rom. xiii, 14.

⁴ Col. ii, 7. ⁵ Cf. Prat, I, p. 310. ⁶ Rom. vi, 2, 3. ⁷ *Id.*, viii, 3.

⁸ Bossuet, *Sermon pour le Samedi-Saint* (Lebarcq, I, p. 112).

⁹ Rom. vi, 10.

¹⁰ Rom. vi, 11.

old man, has vanished in the waters of Baptism in which they are "buried with Christ."¹ If sin, as well as the old man, which is the cause of sin in us, is crucified and destroyed with the mortal flesh of Jesus, we then must be dead unto sin. Therefore we are no longer "slaves of sin"; by our spiritual death in Christ we are "free" from sin.²

According to the teaching of St. Paul, true conversion is a death. It is a participation in the death of Jesus by the destruction of our old man and of our passions which are kept under. Bossuet eloquently interprets these thoughts in his Easter Sermons on the Christian Life.³ When the Apostle declares that our old man and our flesh with its lusts have been "crucified," he does not mean to use a mere metaphor. He intends his words to express realities: our sinful flesh has been really put to death in us in Baptism by our incorporation in Christ crucified.

This participation in the death of Jesus, begun in Baptism, is continued in the Eucharist. The Christian who partakes of the eucharistic bread and drinks the cup of the new covenant communicates in the sacrifice of the cross, for the celebration of the Eucharist is a mystical "sacramental" reiteration of the immolation of Jesus on Calvary.⁴ The communion of the body and blood of Christ is also the great means of participating in His redeeming death and of putting to death our evil tendencies.

But this death to our corrupt inclinations is not solely the effect of the grace of the sacraments, it is also, as we know, the result of our own efforts. St. Paul constantly exhorts us to bear in our bodies the likeness of Jesus crucified, and to "mortify our members which are upon the earth."⁵ The old man is destroyed in principle, in right, by our incorporation into Christ crucified. It remains for us to destroy it in fact. Hence come Christian mortification and the austerities of penance and the strictness of asceticism, which find in the spirituality of St. Paul their full justification.

"Buried with Christ in Baptism," in it, too, we "are risen again with Him by the faith of the operation of God who hath raised Him up from the dead."⁶ Baptism effects, indeed, in our spiritual nature a mystical resurrection, which is a participation in the resurrection of Jesus. The old man destroyed in the waters of Baptism is followed, and the correlation is inevitable, by the regenerated new man. The Christian is thus "a new creature,"⁷ living "a new life"⁸ in the likeness of the risen Christ.

¹ Col. ii, 12.

² Rom. vi, 7.

³ Lebarcq, *Œuvres oratoires de Bossuet*, I, pp. 104, 494.

⁴ 1 Cor. x, 14-21; xi, 24-26.

⁵ 2 Cor. iv, 10; Col. iii, 5.

⁶ Col. ii, 12.

⁷ Gal. vi, 15; 2 Cor. v, 17.

⁸ Rom. vi, 4.

Ascetic Teaching of Jesus and the Apostles 25

The believer spiritually and mystically risen with Jesus must try to make his life conform with the life of the risen Saviour. But Christ once risen dieth no more; and the Christian born to the life of grace must no more do evil. To die to the divine life by relapsing into sin after being incorporated into the risen and immortal Jesus is to fall into a state contrary to one's nature. Moreover, it is to compel the Saviour, who is Himself living, to support dead members in His mystical body: "If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall live also together with Christ. Knowing that Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more. Death shall no more have dominion over Him. For in that He died to sin, He died once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. So do you also reckon that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof."¹

This theme of moral exhortation constantly recurs in the writings of the Apostle² in order to forewarn the faithful against backsliding. Far from relapsing into evil, the Christian must try to "put on" more and more entirely "the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth,"³ so as to be like the risen Christ.

We can see the effect of this beautiful doctrine upon the life of the Christian. The obligation to continue in well-doing is laid strictly upon him who has received the life of grace in Baptism, or who has recovered it by means of penance.

Risen with Jesus, the Christian is also caught up to heaven with Him. After His resurrection Christ ascended into heaven; we who are "grafted" into Him, "rooted" in Him, are therefore spiritually with Him in the heavenly home. If we listen to St. Paul, we are already in heaven seated by the side of Jesus. "But God (who is rich in mercy) for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved), and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus. That He might show in the ages to come the abundant riches of His grace, in His bounty towards us in Christ Jesus."⁴

If the Christian is in heaven in mind and heart with Christ,

¹ Rom. vi, 8-12.

² 2 Cor. v, 14, 15: "The charity of Christ presseth us: judging this, that if one died for all, then all were dead. And Christ died for all: that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again."

³ Eph. iv, 24; Col. iii, 10.

⁴ Eph. ii, 4-7.

his life will be entirely celestial. He will try to set his affections "on the things that are above, and not on those that are on the earth," and "to seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God."¹ For the believer is dead to the things of this world. His real life is in heaven, "hidden with Christ in God." A day will come when this life will appear in heavenly glory.² "Our conversation is in heaven."³ Let us then live as citizens of the heavenly city, as "children of light" who have altogether left behind "the works of darkness,"⁴ as the Apostle says, following in the steps of St. John. "For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light. For the fruit of the light is in all goodness and justice and truth."⁵

God makes Christians "conformable to the image of His Son: that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."⁶ The faithful are incorporated into Christ; they are in a way identified with Him; God loves them with the same love as that with which He loves His Son, and makes them partake of His glorious destiny. He sees in them the "brethren" of His Son and "joint heirs" who are to be "glorified with Him."⁷ In a word, Christians are "children of God"⁸ made like unto Jesus.

The mysterious bond which unites the Christian so closely with Christ uplifts the confidence of St. Paul. It leads the Apostle to reckon as of small account "the sufferings of this time" as compared "with the glory to come,"⁹ which is laid up for the friends of our Saviour. It gives him the assurance "that to them that love God all things work together unto good."¹⁰ Lastly, it affords him the firm conviction that nothing whatever can separate the faithful from the love that Christ and God bear towards them. Listen to the following cry of enthusiasm that breaks forth from the soul of St. Paul: "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? Or distress? Or famine? Or nakedness? Or danger? Or persecution? Or the sword? . . . For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."¹¹

¹ Col. iii, 1, 2.

² Phil. iii, 20.

³ Eph. v, 8, 9. Cf. 1 Thess. v, 5; Rom. xiii, 12. This comparison of conversion to light led to Baptism being called "illumination" in the early Church, and the baptized were called *illuminati*.

⁴ Rom. viii, 29.

⁵ *Id.*, viii, 16.

⁶ *Id.*, viii, 28.

⁷ *Id.*, iii, 3, 4.

⁸ Rom. xiii, 12.

⁹ *Id.*, viii, 17.

¹⁰ *Id.*, viii, 18.

¹¹ *Id.*, viii, 35, 38, 39.

3. *The Ascetic and Mystical Consequences of the Relationship between the New Man and the Holy Spirit and Christ: the Imitation of Christ; St. Paul an "Imitator of Christ"*¹—*Christian Virtues.*

We have tried to sum up in what is, unfortunately, a very imperfect sketch, St. Paul's wonderful teaching as to the new man within us. We have surveyed with admiration the marvels of our incorporation into Christ and our supernatural quickening by the Holy Spirit. It is above all the "ontological" side of our sanctification, God's part in the work of our salvation, which has been brought out. But the Apostle also strongly insists upon—and we have often noted it—the "psychological" aspect of holiness; that is to say, on the efforts we must make to realize it within us.

Christian life is the result of a twofold co-operation: that of God, who makes us conformable to the image of His Son; and our own, whereby we reproduce that image within us. Regarded from our own side, as to the part which is left to our personal efforts, the work of our sanctification—St. Paul constantly reminds us of it—comes back to the imitation of Jesus. If the Christian is incorporated into the Saviour by divine grace, it is his duty to make his life conform with Christ's and to imitate Him. The members who make up the mystical body of Christ would be unfaithful to their calling if they did not reproduce the likeness of their Head as perfectly as possible within themselves.

Let us then dwell upon this teaching of St. Paul, since it is only the corollary of his conception of the Christian life.

The believer will labour above all to appropriate to himself the inward dispositions of Jesus, following the advice of the Apostle: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."² Outward actions are but the outward translation and manifestation of the dispositions of the soul. If we think as Jesus thought, we shall act as He acted. Therefore it is essential for us to make our thoughts and inmost feelings conform with those of Christ, especially with the feelings of humility which led Him, "though He was in the form of God," to "take the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men," and with the obedient mind which made Him "become obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross."³

The Christian will study Christ in the various circumstances of His life, to find out the dispositions with which He was animated and to appropriate them. His thoughts and acts

¹ 1 Cor. xi, 1; iv, 10.

² Phil. ii, 5.

³ Phil. ii, 6-8.

will thus become like Christ's, who will truly be his "life" as the Apostle desires.¹

The doctrine of the interior life put forward in the seventeenth century by the Congregation of the Oratory of Cardinal de Berulle followed on in direct line with the spirituality of St. Paul.

Our efforts to be in conformity with Christ and to imitate Him tend, as the Apostle says, to make us "put on" Christ and to "form" Him within us.² This fashioning of Christ within us takes place by degrees in so far as we co-operate with the work of grace. Its various steps constitute, according to St. Paul, the very degrees of perfection, and correspond with the different ages of Christ. Jesus is once more a child in the newly converted one who is a *beginner*. Then He grows up in proportion to the believer's growth in virtue. He who is *perfect* has attained to being "a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ."³ But the life of Jesus within us may go on increasing indefinitely, and just as our Saviour never tires of infusing His grace into us, so ought we to continue unceasingly "doing the truth in charity, . . . (that) we may in all things grow up in Him who is the head, even Christ."⁴ . . . Our supreme desire, the goal of all our efforts, is indeed to become morally identified with Jesus.

Very completely was the great Apostle identified with Jesus when he said: "To me, to live is Christ."⁵ These words are inscribed upon St. Paul's tomb in Rome as the epitome of his whole life and the true expression of his soul. Christ and St. Paul were really only one: it was no more Paul who lived, but Christ who was living in him.⁶ St. Paul's thoughts were those of Jesus, his feelings were those of His divine Master; he spoke and acted as Christ did, and he could write in all truth to the Corinthians: "Be followers of me, as I also am of Christ."⁷

The strong and almost astonishing expressions used by St. Paul to signify his union with Jesus call to mind the mystical union with which many of the saints were favoured.

¹ Col. iii, 4: "Christ, your life." Eph. iii, 17: "That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts."

² Gal. iv, 19: "My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you."

³ Eph. iv, 13.

⁴ Eph. iv, 15. Cf. v, 1, 2.

⁵ Phil. i, 21.

⁶ Gal. ii, 20. It was the moral Ego of St. Paul that was swallowed up in Christ. The physical Ego, the Apostle's personality, had not disappeared. Whatever heights of sanctity may be attained by the Christian, he always remains a human personality.

⁷ 1 Cor. xi, 1. Cf. iv, 16.

Paul is, in fact, a great mystic, to use the word in the classical signification attached to it by St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, and Catholic theologians. In his Epistles he gives us, as it were, a mystical autobiography, which has been compared with the chapters dealing with the Prayer of Union in the *Autobiography of St. Teresa*.

The characteristic of mystical union, that supernatural state "which we cannot bring about of ourselves, despite all our efforts,"¹ is to experience the feeling of the presence of God in the soul. These states are intermittent, and they alternate with periods of interior desolation and darkness. From time to time God floods the soul of the mystic in a sensible manner, and makes His presence felt by inundating it with happiness: "Sometimes in the midst of a reading," writes St. Teresa, "I was suddenly gripped with a sense of the presence of God. It was absolutely impossible for me to be in any doubt but that He was within me and that I was lost in Him. . . ."² I thought that I felt the presence of God, and this was true; and I tried to keep myself in a recollected state in Him."³

St. Paul must have plainly felt the Christ present and living in his own soul when he cried out: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself for me."⁴

"With Christ nailed to the cross"; Paul is thus not merely in the manner of ordinary Christians who are united with the crucified Christ by curbing their passions and by the acceptance of suffering. He is so far more by a close communion with the Passion of Christ after the manner of St. Francis of Assisi: "God forbid that I should glory," he says, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁵ St. Paul pre-eminently belongs to that group of saints which has a special "devotion" to the Passion of Christ. When he thinks of Him who "died for all" the love of the Apostle is fired, and he becomes eager to live entirely and to die "for Him who died and rose again" for us.⁶

St. Paul's love for Christ became so perfect, ardent, and strong that it expressed itself in an intense desire to die and go to the Saviour to enjoy Him in heaven. "I have a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ," he wrote to the

¹ St. Teresa, *Chemin de la perfection*, ch. xxxiii.

² *Vie écrite par elle-meme*, ch. x. Cf. A. Poulain, *Des grâces d'oraison*, ch. v, vi.

³ *Vie écrite par elle-meme*, ch. xxii.

⁴ Gal. ii, 19, 20. For St. Paul's sufferings see 2 Cor. xi, 23-33.

⁵ *Id.*, vi, 14. In verse 17 St. Paul alludes to the "marks" of the Lord Jesus "in my body." But he is not speaking of such stigmata as St. Francis of Assisi bore, but of the scars which he had received for Christ's sake.

⁶ 2 Cor. v, 14, 15. Cf. Rom. xiv, 8.

Philippians.¹ Nothing but the need of souls for him could mitigate the bitter separation.

Nowhere shall we find more burning words in the writings of the greatest of the mystics who are to be met with in the history of spirituality.² And to complete St. Paul's likeness to the mystics there are the extraordinary gifts, visions, raptures, and ecstasies with which he was favoured. In addition to the miraculous manifestation of Jesus on the road to Damascus,³ there were in the Apostle's life other supernatural phenomena. Of these we should be entirely ignorant had not St. Paul been constrained to reveal them in order to defend himself from attacks upon his reputation at Corinth by judaizing Christians. It is only with excuses and in spite of himself that he sets forth his claims to glory: "If I must glory (it is not expedient indeed): but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ: above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not, or out of the body, I know not: God knoweth), such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I know not: God knoweth): that he was caught up into paradise and heard secret words which it is not granted to a man to utter."⁴

St. Paul's Epistles nearly always end in exhortations to the practice of Christian virtues. Indeed, commentators divide almost all of them into two parts: dogmatic and moral. In the moral portion we find what are brief tracts on Christian virtues, true storehouses for spiritual writers, and here it will be enough to give a few extracts from them.

St. Paul's moral exhortations are derived from his fundamental doctrine of the incorporation of the believer in Christ. Those who have put on Christ must live like Him, "stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new . . . put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience: bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another. . . ."⁵ I beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called."⁶

¹ Phil. i, 23.

² For a description of extraordinary graces and gifts of mystics, see A. Poulain, *Des grâces d'oraison*, ch. xvii, xx to xxiii. These gifts fairly frequently accompany mystical union, but they are phenomena entirely distinct from it, and many saints who were raised to a state of mystical union never had them.

³ Acts ix, 1-19.

⁴ 2 Cor. xii, 1-4. We do not know what these visions were.

⁵ Col. iii, 9, 10, 12, 13. Cf. 1 Thess. iv, 1-11; Gal. v, 23.

⁶ Eph. iv, 1.

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To the newly converted who are obliged to live in the midst of paganism the Apostle urgently commends purity of life.¹ To all he preaches humility,² obedience to superiors,³ submission to the civil authorities,⁴ prudence,⁵ the duty of almsgiving,⁶ the practice of domestic virtues, and the necessity of prayer. In the pastoral Epistles⁷ the Apostle gives pastors of souls a real code of sacerdotal holiness.

But, above all, fraternal charity and reciprocal honour and help are recommended with the greatest frequency by St. Paul. One may say that he reverts to it in one way or another in all his Epistles.

Christians are members of one body of which Jesus is the Head. A close solidarity knits them to one another, however different their circumstances may be, just as in the human body in which members with different functions depend upon one another.⁸ The inference is that we should love and help one another.

In these moving words does the Apostle invite us thus to act. "Let love be without dissimulation . . . loving one another with the charity of brotherhood: with honour preventing one another. . . . Communicating to the necessities of the saints. Pursuing hospitality. Bless them that persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep. Being of one mind one towards another. . . . Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved; but give place unto wrath, for it is written: *Revenge is mine, I will repay*, saith the Lord. But *if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink*. . . ."⁹ Let us not therefore judge one another any more. But judge this rather, that you put not a stumbling-block or a scandal in your brother's way. . . . Let every one of you please his neighbour unto good, to edification. . . .¹⁰ Bear ye one another's burdens: and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ."¹¹

St. Paul attaches such importance to the precept of fraternal charity that he regards it as the summing up of the whole law of God, the commandment which replaces all the

¹ Rom. xiii, 11-14; Eph. iv, 17-30; v, 3-5; Phil. iii, 18-19; Gal. v, 16-25.

² Phil. ii, 3-11; Eph. iv, 2; Rom. xii, 16; Gal. vi, 3-5. Cf. St. Peter: "Do you all insinuate humility one to another: for *God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace*. Be you humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God" (1 Pet. v, 5, 6).

³ 1 Thess. v, 12, 13. Cf. Heb. xiii, 17; 1 Pet. i, 22.

⁴ Rom. xii, 1-7; Titus iii, 1.

⁵ Col. iv, 5, 6.

⁶ 2 Cor. viii, 1 to ix, 15.

⁷ The Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

⁸ Rom. xii, 4, 5; 1 Cor. xii, 12-27.

⁹ Rom. xii, 10-20. Cf. 1 Thess. iv, 9-12.

¹⁰ Rom. xiv, 13.

¹¹ Rom. xv, 2.

¹² Gal. vi, 2. Cf. 1 Thess. v, 14-22.

rest and ensures the perfect keeping of them. "Owe no man anything, but to love one another. For he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law. For : *Thou shalt not commit adultery: Thou shalt not kill: Thou shalt not steal: Thou shalt not bear false witness: Thou shalt not covet.* And if there be any other commandment, it is comprised in this word : *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* The love of our neighbour worketh no evil. Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law."¹

What St. Paul wrote on the subject of fraternal charity constitutes some of the finest portions of his Epistles. It springs from a large heart, affectionate by nature and transformed by grace. The heart of St. Paul was "enlarged"² to take in the faithful of all the churches; ingratitude and persecution could do nothing to contract it. St. Paul's heart was indeed the heart of Christ, as St. John Chrysostom remarks.³ "Although loving you more, I be loved less," says he. "I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls."⁴

And this fair virtue of charity which he practised to such perfection he not only preached, but celebrated its excellence in the following lyrical strain : "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. Charity is patient, is kind : charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil : rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth : beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never falleth away. . . . And now there remain faith,⁵ hope, and charity, these three : but the greatest of these is charity."⁶

Mortification to the point of renouncing more or less thoroughly even lawful things, following Jesus under the

¹ Rom. xii, 8-10. Cf. Gal. v, 14 : "All the law is fulfilled in one word : *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*"

² 2 Cor. vi, 11, 12 : "O ye Corinthians : our heart is enlarged. You are not straitened in us : but in your own bowels are you straitened. But having the same recompense (I speak as to my children), be you also enlarged."

³ In *Ep. ad Romanos*, Homil. xxxii, 3 (P.G. LX, 680).

⁴ 2 Cor. xii, 15. Cf. 1 Thess. ii, 1-10 ; 2 Cor. vi, 1-10.

⁵ See St. Paul on Faith : Rom. x, 17 ; Gal. v, 6 ; 2 Cor. v, 7, etc. Cf. Heb. xi ; James ii.

⁶ 1 Cor. xiii, 1-8, 13.

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guidance of the Holy Spirit, union with Him by love, making Him live within us and the imitation of Him by the practice of Christian virtue in such wise as to copy Him faithfully therein : this is the ascetic teaching of the Scriptures, this is its conception of Christian perfection. Now we shall see how Christians have carried out this divine doctrine in their lives.

CHAPTER II

CHRISTIAN ASCETICISM IN THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES

IN the Church there have been always those who have followed the rules of perfection and practised the evangelical counsels. The Catholic Church has the distinguishing mark of holiness,¹ which is one of her essential qualities. She must always contain within her fold believers in whom shines forth the brightness of exalted virtues, even to the degree of heroism. From the earliest days of her existence are to be found those in communities who were later on termed "ascetics,"² not satisfied with obligatory observances, but taking upon themselves such as were supererogatory and more austere.

We have already seen how St. Paul counselled perfect continence to those Corinthians who desired to serve God with greater perfection. And the Apostle had himself followed this counsel before giving it to others.³

History has handed down to us the memory of certain illustrious virgins belonging to Apostolic times. The Acts of the Apostles make mention of the four daughters of Philip the Evangelist, virgins and prophetesses who lived in their father's house at Caesarea.⁴

According to Clement of Alexandria,⁵ one of the first deacons, Nicholas, with whose name the heresy of the Nicolaïtans has been connected, had daughters who remained virgins until the day of their death. We know that St. John was unmarried when Jesus called him to be a follower, and so he remained until the end. Ecclesiastical writers have found in this a reason for the special love of our Saviour for him.

Others, too, belonging to this period were distinguished for their austerity of life. Hegesippus,⁶ in the fifth book of his Memoirs, relates that in the last third of the first century

¹ "I believe in the *Holy Catholic Church*."

² "Ascetic" comes from the Greek *ἀσκητής*, one who *practises* (virtue). Origen was one of the first to use the word to denote Christians who practised continence and devoted themselves to austerities (*In Jeremiam*, xix, 7 [P.G. XIII, 517]). See St. Hippolytus of Rome, *In Proverbia* (P.G. X, 625), etc.; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedag.* i.

³ 1 Cor. vii, 7. Cf. ix, 5. Some, including Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* iii, 6) and the Pseudo-Ignatius (*Ad Philadelph.* iv, 3), have wrongly supposed that St. Paul was married. They refer to an obscure passage in the Philippians (iv, 3) which cannot invalidate the definite testimony of the first letter to the Corinthians.

⁴ Acts xxi, 8, 9. Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* III, 31.

⁵ *Strom.* ii, 118.

⁶ An ecclesiastical writer of the second century. His writings are only known to us through a few extracts given by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*.

the Bishop of Jerusalem, James the relation of Jesus, lived the life of an ascetic. "He drank neither wine nor strong drink, ate no living creature; his hair was always unshorn; he never anointed himself with oil and abstained from bathing. . . . He went into the temple by himself, and there he was to be found upon his knees praying for the forgiveness of the people. His pre-eminence in justice, moreover, won him the name of 'the Just,'"¹

The first Christian community in Jerusalem gave a beautiful example in renunciation of the goods of this world. The faithful "sold their possessions and their goods and divided them to all, according as every one had need."²

At the close of apostolic times Christian asceticism was extremely flourishing. Records of the second and third centuries both in East and West bear witness to the existence in the churches of numerous ascetics. The history of the spirituality of this period is the history of the early ascetics. This I shall set forth by indicating the position of the ascetics in the Christian communities—by detailing their observances—and by giving a brief account of the exhortations addressed to them by ecclesiastical rulers, wherein we find the spiritual teaching of the first three centuries.³

¹ Eusebius, *H.E.* II, 23.

² Acts ii, 45; v. 4. The Epistle to the Colossians (ii, 16, 21-23) has been taken to allude to the ascetic practices of some of the Churches of Asia Minor, which abstained from certain foods and drinks. But these customs are little known and are called by St. Paul, "traditions of men." They probably arose from a Jewish-pagan syncretism. Cf. Prat, *La théologie de S. Paul*, I, 391-394.

³ CHIEF HISTORIC SOURCES.—(a) The writings of the Apostolic Fathers (Funk's edition, *Patres apostolici*, 2 vols., Tübingen, 1901).

(b) Some treatises by Tertullian amongst which *De virginibus velandis* and the *Exhortatio castitatis* are to be noted.

(c) St. Cyprian's *De habitu virginum*.

(d) The two *Epistles to Virgins*, falsely attributed to St. Clement of Rome. They were written in the third century and addressed to persons of both sexes belonging to an Eastern church to correct certain abuses (Funk, *Patres apostolici*, ii).

(e) The *Feast of the Ten Virgins*, by St. Methodius, Bishop of Olympia, in Lycia, who was martyred about 311. This work is a copy of Plato's Banquet. But the subject of the table talk is Virginité instead of Love, as in Plato's *Symposium*, each of the ten young guests uttering a panegyric on Virginité. The text is given in Migne, P.G. XVIII, 9-408.

(f) Origen's *Homilies*.

See F. Martinez, *L'ascétisme chrétien pendant les trois premiers siècles de l'Église*. Paris, 1913.

I.—THE POSITION OF ASCETICS IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

THE form of asceticism most widely observed was the practice of continence freely chosen by a certain number of Christians of both sexes. The continent lived in the world. They remained in their families and shared in the common life of Christian society. It was only later, towards the close of the third century and the beginning of the fourth, that they began to withdraw into the solitude of the desert or to live in community. In the churches they were known as those who were more austere than others and as making a profession of virginity. They formed in a measure a group apart, which was treated with respect in Christian assemblies.

At Smyrna, about 110, the band of virgins was important and remarkable; it became like the "order" of widows. St. Ignatius of Antioch makes special mention of it in his letter to that church.¹ St. Polycarp, writing to the Philippians a few years later, is far from forgetting the virgins whose conscience must be without reproach and whose life most pure.² Hermas refers, too, to the virgins of the Church of Rome, and Origen tells Celsus of those who follow perfect virginity (*ἀσκούσι τὴν παντελῆ παρθενίαν*) for the sake of prayer.³

Virgins were the glory of Christian communities. We fail to understand fully the pride of the heads of the churches in the possession of virgins whose altogether heavenly purity stood out in contrast with all the pagan corruption around them.

In exalting the holiness of Christian conduct the apologists of the second century do not fail to point out those who practised virginity for the admiration of the heathen. "Many men and women," says St. Justin in his first *Apologia* for Christianity, "from sixty to seventy years of age, brought up from childhood in the law of Christ, have kept pure (*ἄφθοροι*); I can show you them in all classes of society."⁴ Tatian⁵ and Athenagoras,⁶ authors of admirable apologies on behalf of the Christian religion, contrast with the lewdness of pagan Greece the wisdom and purity of Christians who have waxed old in celibacy.⁷

The fearful calumnies spread by the heathen about Christian conduct are well known; accusations of incest and

¹ *Smyrn.*, xiii, 1.

² *Phil.* v, 3.

³ *Sim.* ix, 10, 11.

⁴ *Contra Cels.*, vii, 48 (P.G. XI, 1492).

Emperors and the Roman Senate. He wrote it at Rome about 150.

⁵ *1 Apol.* xv, 6. St. Justin addresses this first *Apologia* to the

⁶ *Tatiani oratio ad Graecos.*

⁷ *Legatio pro christianis*, 33. Tatian and Athenagoras wrote about 170.

similar crimes. Christian apologists triumphantly rebutted them by citing the teaching of Jesus with regard to chastity, and telling of the existence of virgins in the Church. The disgraceful things of which we are accused, said Tertullian to the governors of the Roman provinces, are to be found amongst the heathen. As for Christians, they are preserved from such things by the strict obligation that binds them to the practice of chastity. And further, he adds, there are a certain number to be found amongst us, who have avoided every assault of such deceits with the aid of continence, old in age with the innocence of a child.¹ Minutius Felix a few years earlier had made use of the same argument: "The lust of incest," we read in his *Octavius*, "is so far from the hearts of Christians that some of them are ashamed even of lawful unions, and many of them find all their happiness in keeping their bodies pure and inviolate."² The same reasoning is to be found next century in Origen's refutation of the calumnies of Celsus against the Christians.³

Celibates made a living and triumphant apology for Christianity. Their virtues imparted its full significance to the beautiful description of the life of the Christians of the second century given by the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* to a pagan: "Christians do not differ from other men in country or language or peculiarity of life. For there are no towns set apart for them, nor language spoken by them alone, and there is no eccentricity in their manner of living. . . . They inhabit the towns of the Greeks or the Barbarians, as their lot may be, and while following the customs of the country in which they are, whether in the matter of clothing or food or other habits, they lead an admirable sort of life which in the eyes of all men is taken to be a prodigy. Each one of them dwells in his own country, but as a stranger; they share in everything as citizens, and endure everything as if they did not belong to the country. All foreign lands are their fatherland, and every fatherland is to them a foreign land. . . . They are in the flesh, but they live not after the flesh. They dwell on earth, but their city is in the heavens. They obey the law, but by their manner of life they are above the law. They love everyone, and everyone persecutes them. They are overlooked and they are condemned and put to death, and yet there are always Christians. They are poor and they enrich others; they lack everything, and yet good things come to them. . . . People curse them, and they bless; they

¹ *Apologet.* 9: *Quidam (christiani) multo securiores totam vim hujus erroris virgine continentia depellunt, senes pueri.*

² *Octavius*, 31 (P.L. III, 337): *Tantum . . . abest incesti cupido, ut nonnullis rubori sit etiam pudica conjunctio . . . Plerique inviolati corporis virginitate perpetua fruuntur.* Cf. *Athenagoras, Legatio*, 33.

³ *Contra Cels.* i, 26 (P.G. XI, 709, 712).

are insulted, and they still show respect to others. When they do good, they are punished as criminals; and when they are put to death, they rejoice, for in death they find life. . . . In short, what the soul is in the body, that Christians are in the world. The soul pervades every member of the body, and Christians are in every town in the world. The soul dwells in the body, but it does not come from the body; so do Christians dwell in the world, but they are not of the world."¹

Defenders of Christian manners against outside enemies, the continent were also excellent helpers of the heads of the churches in overcoming difficulties from within. Their austerity of life was a perpetual call to detachment from the pleasures and delights of the pagan world. Many Christians found some difficulty in cutting themselves off from them, so impregnated was the society of those days with paganism. Bishops liked to direct the admiration of their flocks, constantly exposed to defilement by contact with the world, to the example of the virgins. Thus they sustained the weak and kept them in the path of duty.²

And then, in those days of periodical persecution Christians were frequently in danger and had to be in readiness to confess the faith under torture. They had to be on their guard against an easy mode of life and slackness, which relax moral energy and disarm the soul in the hour of battle. It was because such precautions were neglected that in the Decian persecution of 250 so many Christians apostatized in Africa. But the presence of the followers of chastity in the churches was peculiarly adapted to increase virility of character and to put the soul on its mettle to face the final conflict. "For," as St. Methodius, Bishop of Olympia, declares, "those vowed to chastity are pledged to undergo a sort of perpetual martyrdom. Indeed, not only for a few brief moments do they put up with the burden of the body, but their whole life long. They fear not to endure the truceless and truly Olympian struggle of chastity, and to resist the cruel transports of the passions."³

¹ *Ep. ad Diognetum*, cap. 5-6. This beautiful passage treats of ordinary Christians, not of ascetics.

² *Ep. Clementis ad Virgines*, i, 3: *Sunt enim utriusque sexus virgines pulchrum quoddam exemplar (propositum et praesentibus) fidelibus et iis qui (deinceps) futuri sunt fideles.*

³ *Feast of the Ten Virgins*, vii, 3 (P.G. XVIII, 128, 129). Cf. *Ep. Clem.*, i, 5: *Virgo igitur esse cupis? . . . Vince corpus, vince carnis libidines, vince mundum in spiritu Dei; vince vanas istas praesentis saeculi res; . . . vince draconem, vince leonem, vince serpentem, vince satanam per Jesum Christum, qui te roboraturus est auditione verborum suorum et divina eucharistia. Tolle crucem tuam et sequere eum qui te mundavit Jesum Christum . . . quicumque enim ambulat perfectus in fide nec timet, is revera accipit coronam virginitalis, quae ut res est magni laboris, ita et magnam quoque habet mercedem.*

Thus in the Christian communities virgins were a leaven of intense religious life and of generous enthusiasm. Their influence made itself felt even amongst the clergy, who at last were morally compelled by public opinion to imitate them and to live in continence. This was in part, at any rate, the origin of ecclesiastical celibacy.

Now we can understand the feelings of admiration with which the heads of the churches spoke of the continent and of virginity.

Of all classes of the faithful that of the virgins is dearest to the Church.¹ To St. Cyprian the band of virgins at Carthage is the most honourable part of Christ's flock, the bright flower of the Church's garden, the most glorious manifestation of the fruitfulness of Christ's bride, the glory of heavenly grace. It is with what almost amounts to an apology that the Bishop of Carthage addresses them with exhortation and advice.²

The faithful, for their part, treated the virgins with great consideration. They loaded them with honours and kind attentions. In gatherings for worship they certainly placed them immediately next to the clergy.³ In the East, according to Origen, the virgins came close after the martyrs, and along with the widows they were entrusted with certain functions in the Church.⁴

Those who practised chastity constantly gained in importance. In the third century they constituted in each church a sort of "aristocracy"⁵ which had to be reckoned with. Frequently the extravagant praises bestowed upon them were a species of rhetorical precaution intended to pave the way for censures that were sometimes severe. The writer of the *Epistolae Clementis* gravely addressed his two letters "to the brethren and sisters who have entered into the state of

¹ *Feast of the Ten Virgins, id.*

² *De habitu virginum*, 3: "Nunc nobis ad virgines sermo est, quarum quo sublimior gloria est major et cura est. Flos est ille ecclesiastici germinis, decus atque ornamentum gratiae spiritalis, laeta indoles, laudis et honoris opus integrum atque incorruptum, Dei imago respondens ad sanctimoniam Domini, illustrior portio gregis Christi, gaudet per illas atque in illis largiter floret Ecclesiae matris gloriosa fecunditas, quantoque plus copiosa virginitas numero suo addit, gaudium matris augecit. Ad has loquimur, has adhortamur affectu potiusquam potestate. . ." Cf. *Ep. Clem.* ix, 3, 4. Origen, *Hom. III in Gen.* 6 (P.G. XII, 181).

³ Tertullian, *De vel. virg.* 14.

⁴ *In Ep. ad Rom.* 9 (P.G. XIV, 1205).

⁵ St. Methodius calls the band of virgins the "Order of Virgins." *Feast.* vii, 3 (P.G. XVIII, 129). From the fourth century onwards ascetics were often called "Confessors," and the more famous among them after death attained to the cultus before then confined to martyrs.

virginity."¹ He feels that it is needful to win their sympathy and to be accommodating to them before pointing out to them wherein their behaviour wants mending.

The extraordinary honour paid to virgins was not, indeed, without its drawbacks. It stimulated their *amour propre*, and might lead them on to be insubordinate with regard to their ecclesiastical superiors. St. Ignatius of Antioch, in the early times in which he lived, already counselled the continent to be "subject to the bishop who is the head of the community." These difficulties reappear later on.

To the order of virgins must be added that of the widows who after the death of their husbands pledged themselves to the practice of continence. It was amongst these that the deaconesses were chosen. They lived ascetic lives. They were treated with great consideration,² and, like the virgins, they were the subjects of episcopal solicitude. St. Polycarp recommended the widows of the church of Philippi "to have a wise and prudent faith, to pray without ceasing for all men, to shun calumny, evil-speaking, false witness, covetousness, in a word, all that is bad; to remember that they are the altar of God, that all their offerings are closely inspected by the Lord, and that no single one of their thoughts, intentions, and secrets is hidden from Him."³

II.—OBSERVANCES OF THE EARLY ASCETICS

THE essential observance, the one that ostensibly put a Christian amongst the ascetics, was, then, the practice of virginity.⁴ Without it there was no hope of pursuing Christian perfection.⁵

To pledge oneself to celibacy was a matter of free choice. Such an undertaking was known to the faithful and sanctioned, at any rate tacitly, by ecclesiastical authority.⁶ In

¹ *Ep. Clem. ad Virg.* i, 1: [*Fratribus*] *virginibus beatis qui dederunt se servandae virginitati propter regnum caelorum, et [sororibus] virginibus sacris.*

² The band of widows is called "the council of widows" (*γερουσία τῶν χηρῶν*) in the *Feast of the Ten Virgins*, v, 8 (P.G. XVIII, 112).

³ *Ad Philipp.* iv, 3. On the widows and the counsels given them see *Didascalia* xiv, xv. *Canons of Hippolytus*, 59, 157, 183, in Duchesne's *Origine du Culte chrétien*, 1908, pp. 508, 514, 516.

⁴ *Feast*, viii, 1 (P.G. XVIII, 137): Virginity is the fairest of virtues, surpassing all the rest, a good unrivalled.

⁵ *Feast*, i, 4 (P.G. XVIII, 44): "Virginity is perfection," *τὸ τέλειον . . . παρθενία.*

⁶ In the fourth century the consecration of those pledged to virginity was always performed with solemn ceremonies and presided over by the bishop.

principle it was final,¹ and the bishop's consent was necessary before the celibate who had imprudently pledged himself to such an exalted state was allowed to resume his freedom without scandalizing anyone.²

The Christian who was vowed to chastity "was consecrated to God," and contracted a kind of spiritual marriage with Christ, whose yoke he accepted. The will of the heavenly Bridegroom became his inviolable rule of life.³ Violation of one's "oath to Christ"⁴ always caused great scandal in a Christian community. It was looked upon as the committal of a sort of "act of adultery against the Saviour,"⁵ and ecclesiastical authority had to intervene to determine the conditions on which reparation was to be made.⁶

We can understand how the authorities had to watch over the behaviour of those pledged to virginity with care in order to check scandal. Little by little they were led to lay down certain rules of life, and the sum total of these constituted the discipline which the followers of chastity were called to obey.

In a still pagan society celibates living in the world had to observe the greatest reserve. There were some who were at times unable to keep within its limits.

Some of them imagined that in joining the band of celibates they need not live with any greater austerity than other Christians nor put any check upon their conduct.⁷ The regard in which they were held by the faithful was also a source of difficulties. The society of those pledged to virginity was sought after. The leading members of the churches took pleasure in offering them hospitality.⁸ These house-to-house visits were not without their disadvantages and gave rise to gossip. Lastly, amongst the young women dedicated to God were those who appeared not to be sorry to attract attention in Christian gatherings nor to shrink from wearing worldly apparel.

It became necessary to put an end to such abuses, for they

¹ St. Cyprian, *Epist.* iv, 1 (Hartel, III, 473): (*Virgines*) quae cum semel statum suum continenter et firmiter tenere decreverint. Cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion.* i, 29.

² Cf. Cyprian, *id.*: Si autem perseverare nolunt vel non possunt (*virgines*) melius nubant quam in ignem delictis suis cadant. Certe nullum fratribus aut sororibus scandalum faciant. . . . Cf. *Feast*, iii, 14.

³ Tertullian, *De oratione*, 22: Aliqua (virgo) se Deo vovit. . . . Nupsisti enim Christo, illi carnem tuam tradidisti. Age pro mariti tui disciplina. Cf. Cyprian, *De habitu virg.* 4 (Hartel, I, 189, 190). Origen, *Hom. XI in Lev.* (P.G. XII, 529). *Feast*, vi, 5: "I am the spouse of the Word," Νυμφὶς οὐαὶ τοῦ Λόγου, says a virgin.

⁴ St. Cyprian, *Epist.* iv, 2: (*Virgines*) se ex fide Christo dicaverunt.

⁵ St. Cyprian, *De habitu Virginum*, 20; *Epist.* iv, 4: Christi adultera est.

⁶ Cf. St. Cyprian, *Epist.* iv, 4.

⁷ *Epist. Clem. ad Virg.* i, 3.

⁸ Tertullian, *De Virg.* vel. 14.

threatened to spread, principally in Africa. Tertullian took upon himself to do this. In his treatise *De Virginibus velandis* he advises young women dedicated to God, with his usual ardour, to show more restraint in their behaviour and more modesty in their dress. Particularly does he reveal impatience at their appearance in Christian meetings without any veils. The veil, says he, is to the virgin a helmet and shield to ward off temptation and the risk of incurring scandal or suspicion of the ill-disposed.¹

A few years later St. Cyprian, a man of rule and discipline,² felt constrained to recall and particularize the rules of prudence to certain of the virgins of Carthage who had forgotten them. On this occasion he wrote one of the finest books that have come down to us from antiquity on the subject of virginity: *De habitu Virginum*. After praising virginity enthusiastically he indicates the fine precautions that must be taken to avoid any injury to a virtue so delicate. Like Tertullian, and quite rightly, the Bishop of Carthage attaches great importance to the outward demeanour of virgins. Chastity is not, indeed, an entirely inward virtue. It must shine outwardly in modest behaviour and suitable clothing. It is not enough to be a virgin in bodily purity, but one must be so in one's whole personality. What would be said of a virgin who adorned herself as if she were a married woman or in search of a husband?³

It is such right notions as these, which prompted ascetic writers of later date, that underlie the directions given by St. Cyprian. Virgins ought to dress with modesty; they should not paint or rouge themselves or wear ornaments or jewellery.⁴ They are forbidden to go to wedding-feasts⁵ or public baths where, according to pagan practice, men and women then used to mingle.⁶

¹ *De Virg. vel.* 15: *Virginibus . . . confugit ad velamen capitis quasi ad galeam, quasi ad clypeum qui bonum suum protegat adversus ictus tentationum, adversus jacula scandalorum, adversus suspiciones et susurros.*

² *Disciplina custos spei, retinaculum fidei, dux itineris salutaris, fomes ac nutrimentum bonae indolis, magistra virtutis, facit in Christo manere semper ac jugiter Deo vivere, ad promissa caelestia et divina praemia pervenire* (*De habitu Virginum*, 1 [Hartel, I, 187]).

³ *Id.*, 5: *Continentia vero et pudicitia non in sola carnis integritate consistit sed etiam in cultus et ornatus honore pariter ac pudore. . . . Virgo non esse tantum sed et intelligi debet et credi: nemo cum virginem viderit, dubitet an virgo sit. Parem se integritas in omnibus praestet nec bonum corporis cultus infamet. Quid ornata, quid compta procedit, quasi maritum aut habeat aut quaerat?* (Hartel, I, 191). *Cf. Feast*, v, 6; viii, 2.

⁴ *De habitu Virginum*, 9.

⁵ *Id.*, 18. *The Feast*, v, 4, forbids virgins to go to wedding-feasts or dances.

⁶ *De habitu Virginum*, 19. On this pagan practice, severely condemned by the Church, see the *Didascalia*, Nau's translation, pp. 13, 18. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedag.* iii, 5.

Another rather strange irregularity arose in a few churches at the beginning of the third century and claimed the attention of the bishops. This was the experiment of followers of chastity belonging to both sexes to live together. Virgins living apart from their families chose as their guardians one or more ascetics of the opposite sex, and sometimes, taking piety as a pretext, they travelled alone with them or even dwelt in the same house.¹ They were called *subintroductae*.

However right their intentions may have been, this way of acting was most unseemly and altogether risky. Rigour was required for its suppression. St. Cyprian, consulted by one of his African colleagues on a case of this sort, decides that the *subintroductae* must at once quit their guardians and do penance for their misbehaviour. In case of relapse they are to be temporarily excluded from Christian meetings. This exclusion is to be perpetual if they obstinately refuse to leave their guardians. Any virgin who has given rise to public scandal is to be rigorously subjected to public penance.²

The writer of the *Epistolae Clementis ad Virgines* addresses to his correspondents most energetic protests against the same abuse. He tells them of the care with which all intercourse with persons of the opposite sex is avoided by those vowed to chastity in his own church.³ He strongly exhorts those to whom he is writing to do the same. In later times the bishops again had to take in hand the question of the *subintroductae*.⁴

These disorders were inevitable when celibates began to live in the world and enjoy the use of liberty enough. To put a stop to it, in the fourth century it became necessary to

¹ *Ep. Clem. ad Virg.* i, 10: *Loquimur . . . de impudentibus hominibus qui sub praetextu pietatis cum virginibus (in eadem domo) habitant . . . aut soli cum illis deambulant per viam . . . cujusmodi agendi ratio . . . viros religiosos prorsus dedecet. Cf. Hermas, Sim. ix, 11.*

² St. Cyprian, *Ep.* iv, 4.

³ *Nos igitur, Deo nos adjuvante, nosmet ita gerimus: cum virginibus non habitamus nihilque nobis in communi est cum ipsis: cum virginibus neque edimus neque bibimus, et ubi dormit virgo, ibi non dormimus nos. Neque lavant pedes nostros mulieres neque unguunt nos, et omnino non dormimus ibi ubi somnum capit puella innupta aut Deo sacrata; et ne pernoctamus quidem ibidem, si haec sit sola (quancumque) in alio aliquo loco. . . . Apud nos autem tunc ibi esse non potest femina quaequam, sive adolescentula sit sive maritata; neque vetula neque sacrata Deo, neque ancilla christiana neque ethnica; verum solum modo viri cum viris esse possunt (*Ep. Clem. ad Virgines*).*

⁴ Similar counsels are to be found in the Pseudo-Athanasius *On Virginity and Asceticism*. The Council of Ancyra in 314, canon xix, positively forbids celibates of both sexes to dwell under the same roof. St. John Chrysostom in two Pastoral Letters censures those of the clergy who had in their houses virgins vowed to God (P.G. XLVII, 495-514) and deaconesses who dwelt with men (*id.*, 513-532). Cf. St. Jerome, *Ep.* CXXV, *ad Rusticum monachum*, n. 6.

institute communities of women in which virgins vowed to God lived together under a superior.

But most of those vowed to chastity faithfully kept the rules of life laid down for them. The ecclesiastical authorities knew, too, how to call them to do this by fervent exhortation, firing them with courage and wonderfully enhancing the excellence of their vocation in their own eyes. And, in fact, the finest passages of early ascetic literature have to do with the praise of virginity. "O virgins," cries St. Cyprian, "you are already that which we shall be hereafter. Even in this life you possess in some measure the glory of the resurrection; you pass through this world and are yet unsullied by it. By your chastity and virginity you are like God's own angels."¹

"The womb of a blessed Virgin," writes the author of the *Letters of Clement*, "bore our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It was from a holy Virgin that our Lord took the body with which He fulfilled His mission. And our Lord, after taking His manhood from a Virgin, Himself lived on earth in a state of virginity. Learn thereby the excellence and beauty of virginity! . . . John the Forerunner, who went before the coming of our Lord, was greater than any born of women; this holy herald of our Lord was a celibate. The other John who lay upon our Lord's bosom, and whom He loved much, he too was undefiled, for not without reason did our Lord love him. Let us mention also Paul, Barnabas, and Timothy, and others whose names are written in the book of life, who all loved chastity with an exceeding love and ran their course on earth with spotless lives."²

With indescribable enthusiasm, and in words that the most skilful translation can only mar, St. Methodius chants the praises of virginity, a virtue supremely great, wonderful, and glorious. Its origin is divine; it is a plant borne from the heights of heaven, a perfume such as earth cannot exhale. Virginity has her feet upon the earth, but her head is lifted up into heaven itself. She is the fountain-head and the first-fruits of incorruptibility.³

Virginity makes those who embrace it like God.⁴ Those who would endeavour to imitate Christ must try to practise it, for it is the likeness of God. The Word made flesh Himself alone could teach it to the earth, for He is the Chief of virgins as He is the Chief of priests, the Chief of prophets, the Chief of pastors, and the Chief of angels.⁵

¹ *De habitu Virginum*, 22 (Hartel, I, 203): (*Virgines*) *quod futuri sumus, jam vos esse coepistis. Vos resurrectionis gloriam in isto saeculo jam tenetis, per saeculum sine saeculi contagione transitis: cum castae perseveratis et virgines, angelis Dei estis aequales.*

² Clement, *Ep. ad Virgines*, i, 6. Cf. *Feast*, xi, 2.

³ *Feast*, i, 1.

⁴ *Id.*, viii, 1.

⁵ *Feast*, i, 4, 5.

Virginity is the most excellent and worthy of offerings that can be made to God.¹ By it paradise has been restored to earth. It transmutes mortality into incorruptibility; it reconciles men with God.²

But this priceless treasure of chastity is borne in fleshly vessels. Its followers must not forget this: and therefore they are bidden to defend it with care, protecting it with the twofold rampart of mortification and prayer.

Those vowed to chastity gave themselves up, indeed, to the austerities of penance. In the earliest days Christians fasted twice a week, Wednesdays and Fridays.³ But celibates extended the practice and added to it strict times of abstinence.

"We often meet with Christians," says Origen, "who might marry and thus spare themselves the aggravation of the struggle between the flesh and the spirit. They prefer to refrain from exercising their right, but to lay upon themselves hard penances, to keep under their bodies by fasting, to bring them under obedience by abstinence from certain foods, and thus in every way to mortify by the spirit the works of the flesh."⁴

Those who wage this warfare with the weapons of mortification must be of an energetic disposition. For, as Methodius says, "virginity requires a strong and generous nature, which soars with a vigorous beat of wing above the tide of pleasure and makes for loftiest heights of heaven, a steadfast nature which never goes back upon its resolution to keep its virginity, until it has passed beyond the borders of this world and reached heaven to contemplate in all its brightness Purity in itself as it proceeds from the stainless soul of the Almighty."⁵

But the efforts of those vowed to chastity would be in vain if they were not sustained by grace. "Let not him who is pure in body glorify himself, knowing that he who grants the gift of continence (ἡ γρηγορία)⁶ is another than himself." This admonition addressed by Clement of Rome to the continent of the church of Corinth was a call to prayer. "Perfect

¹ *Id.*, v, 1.

² *Id.*, iv, 2. Similar considerations are to be met with in Origen's *Homilies*.

³ *Doctrina Apostolorum*, viii, 1; *Hermas*, Sim. v, 1; Tertullian, *De jejuniis*, 14; *Ad uxorem*, ii, 4; *De oratione* 19.

⁴ *In Jeremiam Hom.* XIX, 7 (P.G. XIII, 517). Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedag.* i, 7 (P.G. VIII, 317). St. Hippolytus of Rome also speaks of the austere life of the ascetics. *In Genesim* (P.G. X, 601). *Ep. Clementis ad Virgines*, i, 12: *Jejuniis vestris et precationibus ac continuis vigiliis opera carnis mortificate per virtutem Spiritus Sancti.*

⁵ *Feast*, i, 1 (P.G. XVIII, 37).

⁶ *Clem.* xxxviii, 2.

chastity," says Origen, "is an extraordinary gift; God grants it to those who desire it with all their hearts and ask Him for it with faith by unceasing prayer."¹

Virgins and ascetics engaged in repeated prayers. They evidently participated in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the common prayer of public worship, or vigils. A vigil, beginning with the first century, used to take place every week on the night between Saturday and Sunday. It was made up of readings, homilies, hymns, and chanted Psalms and prayers.² The service held on a vigil gave rise later on to the office of Matins.³

Fervent believers, in the front rank of whom were the virgins and ascetics, made other prayers in their own homes. They regarded it as a duty to pray, according to the Jewish custom,⁴ morning, noon, and evening.⁵ The *Teaching of the Apostles* advises the saying of the *Pater Noster* three times a day.⁶ Many passages in the Bible⁷ mention as hours specially given to prayer the third, the sixth, and ninth hours; that is to say, nine o'clock in the morning, noon, and three o'clock in the afternoon. These were just the hours when Christ was condemned to death,⁸ crucified, and died. They became the hours of prayer for the faithful. Tertullian also mentions prayer before meals. In short, a fervent Christian ought to pray "at all times and in all places."⁹

The faithful prayed kneeling down, except on the feasts of Easter and Whitsunday, when they remained standing in token of rejoicing. In Africa they lifted up their hands to a certain extent towards heaven, and, like the Publican in the Gospel, looked downwards uttering the words of their form of prayer in an undertone.¹⁰ Origen thinks it is best to pray with uplifted hands and eyes;¹¹ this is the attitude of the suppliant so often pictured in the Roman catacombs, and no doubt it was that adopted by the Christians of Alexandria.

The spirit of prayer in the faithful and ascetics was care-

¹ *Comment. in Matt.* xiv, 25 (P.G. XIII, 1252).

² Tertullian, *De oratione*, 28.

³ Cf. Duchesne, *Origine du culte chrétien*, 1898, p. 219. The vigil was not long before it was celebrated also on the anniversaries of martyrs and on days of solemn prayer or fasting. See Batiffol, *Histoire du Bréviaire romain*, Paris, 1911, pp. 1-15.

⁴ Psalm liv, 18; Daniel vi, 10.

⁵ Tertullian, *De oratione*, 23, 25.

⁶ *Teaching of the Apostles*, viii, 3.

⁷ Acts iii, 1; x, 9; Numbers xxviii, 4 ff.

⁸ Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* vii, 7.

⁹ Tertullian, *De oratione*, 25; *De jejuniis*, 10; St. Cyprian, *De dominica oratione*, 34, 35. These private prayers made at different hours of the day became the Hours of the canonical Office.

¹⁰ Tertullian, *De oratione*, 17, 23, 25; St. Cyprian, *De dominica oratione*, 4, 6.

¹¹ Origen, *De oratione*, 31 (P.G. XI, 549-552).

fully maintained by eloquent homilies of the heads of the churches.

Prayer wins victories with God, says Tertullian; it alone possesses full power over Him.¹ It masters the elements and forces of nature, as we learn from the records of the Old Testament. But in the supernatural order it is still more powerful. It is profitable to the souls of the departed, it strengthens the weak, it cancels sin, it repels temptation, it raises up those who fall, it confirms those who stand. . . . Prayer is the rampart of our faith, the weapon and sword with which we beat down the enemy who prowls around us. Let us never go forward without this weapon.²

But the condition upon which our prayer will be answered is obedience to our Saviour's commands, particularly to His command to forgive wrongs. Our prayer will be all the better heard the purer our life and the more it is in harmony with God's ordinances.³ When good works, and especially alms, sustain our prayers, they will be acceptable all the more readily to God.⁴ Barren prayers, unaccompanied with acts of goodness, are, on the contrary, vain and unavailing with God.⁵ Holiness of life is the best pledge of the powerfulness of prayer.

Real prayer also requires attention of mind and heart. The bishop begins eucharistic prayer by calling upon the faithful to lift up their hearts; that is to say, to think only of the Lord and to forget all else. We should be wanting in respect for the divine majesty if we spoke to God without thinking of Him or of what we were saying. How can we ask God to hear us if we do not ourselves listen to what we are saying?⁶

Frequent prayers, participation in the Eucharist, and practices of mortification: such were the "religious exercises" of the virgins and ascetics.

These acts of piety were not enough to fill up their time. In addition, from the earliest times those vowed to chastity were

¹ *De oratione*, 29; *Sola est oratio quae Deum vincit*.

² *Id.*: *Oratio murus est fidei, arma et tela nostra adversus hominem qui nos undique observat. Itaque nunquam inermes incedamus*.

³ Tertullian, *De oratione*, 10, 11, 12. Cf. Origen, *De oratione*, 31.

⁴ St. Cyprian, *De opere et eleemosynis*, 5 (Hartel, I, 377).

⁵ St. Cyprian, *De dominica oratione*, 33: *Cito orationes ad Deum ascendunt quas ad Deum merita nostri operis imponunt, 32: Inefficax petitio est, cum precatur Deum sterilis oratio . . . sermo non habens fructum promereri Deum non potest, quia nulla operatione secundus est*.

⁶ *Id.*, 31: *Sacerdos ante orationem praelatione praemissa parat fratrum mentes dicendo: Sursum corda, ut dum respondet plebs: Habemus ad Dominum, admoneatur nihil aliud se quam Dominum cogitare debere . . . quomodo audiri te a Deo postulas, cum te ipse non audias? Vis esse Dominum memorem tui cum rogas, quando tui memor ipse non sis? Cf. Origen, De oratione*.

charged with certain charitable services in Christian communities, such as visiting orphans, the poor, and the sick.¹ The social functions of the ascetics were not confined to prayer and to giving an example of the highest Christian virtues. They found their natural fulfilment in ministering to the needs of the suffering members of Christ.

St. Cyprian wrote his treatise *De opere et eleemosynis* to stir up the faithful of Carthage to almsgiving and works of mercy.² The counsels he gives are addressed to all, but especially to those who by their profession were bound to a more strict observance of the law of Christ.

III.—THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES: CHRISTIAN VIRTUES— UNION WITH CHRIST

IN this early period we do not find any treatises on Spirituality, properly so called. The works of this age, so far as they have come down to us, arose out of circumstances in view of the needs of the day. Ascetic considerations are usually intermingled with the rest of the teaching without taking the form of any methodical exposition.

However, when the needs of the faithful demanded it, ecclesiastical writers dwelt especially upon some one Christian virtue or means of sanctification. We know their works on Virginité and on Prayer. We shall meet with others on Martyrdom, on Detachment from the life of this world, and on Patience.

Ecclesiastical writers insisted in the first place upon essential duties which were common to ascetics and ordinary Christians. Above all was it necessary to forewarn the faithful against the evil and seductive influences of pagan life.

The beginning of the *Teaching of the Apostles* and the second part of the *Epistle of Barnabas* afford a celebrated

¹ *Ep. Clem. ad Virg.* i, 12, 13; *Feast*, xi, 1; *Canons of Hippolytus*, 157 (Duchesne, p. 514).

² Note the following fine passage in praise of works of charity: *Praeclara et divina res, fratres carissimi, salutaris operatio, solacium grande credentium, securitatis nostrae salubre praesidium, munimentum spei, tutela fidei, medella peccati, res posita in potestate facientis, res et grandis et facilis, sine periculo persecutionis corona pacis, verum Dei munus et maximum, infirmis necessarium, fortibus gloriosum, quo christianus adjutus praefert gratiam spiritalem, promeretur Christum judicem, Deum computat debitorem* (St. Cyprian, *De opere et eleemosynis*, 26 [Hartel, I, 394]).

example of such moral exhortation intended for all Christians: "There are two paths, one of life, the other of death. But there is a great difference between these two paths."¹ To follow the path of life is to love one's Creator and Redeemer; to keep His commandments, to be humble and gentle; to respect human life and the innocence of childhood; to avoid impurity, perjury, lying, anger, sorcery, avarice and blasphemy; to shun schism, to give alms, to provide a good education for one's children, to confess one's sins in Christian gatherings² so as not to go and pray with a bad conscience. The path of death is evil and full of curses. Those who take to it give themselves over to the vices and debauchery of paganism.

Similar subjects frequently recur in the exhortations of the early Church,³ when the teaching of the principles of Christian morality to the converts from paganism was specially needed. Clement of Alexandria, after showing the falseness of heathen religions and the truth of Christianity in his *Exhortation to the Gentiles*, puts before the convert the essential rules of Christian life; this is the subject-matter of his *Schoolmaster*. He does not handle the counsels of perfection until he comes to his third book, the *Stromata*. The essential precepts of the Christian religion are also what are usually taught by Origen in his *Homilies*. Nevertheless, fairly often he rises to a higher level, and, speaking on Christian virtues and the imitation of Christ, attains to heights worthy of the greatest preachers of asceticism.

Indeed, the heads of the churches did not fail to use every opportunity to exhort the faithful to practise Christian virtue and perfection.

About the year 90 St. Clement had to write to the Christians of Corinth to quell a sedition that had been fomented among them through jealousy of their presbyters. In his letter the Bishop of Rome reminds them of the "need of maintaining harmony by practising forgiveness of injuries, charity, peace, and invariable equity." He also treats of "faith, penance . . . continence, chastity, and patience,"⁴ and above all of humility and obedience.

¹ *Teaching of the Apostles*, i. Cf. the *Epistle of Barnabas*, xviii: "There are two paths of teaching and action: that of light and that of darkness; but there is a great difference between them. At the head of the one are the angels of God, the bringers of light, at the head of the other are the angels of Satan" (Hemmer, *The Apostolic Fathers*, I, p. 93).

² *The Teaching of the Apostles*, xiv, makes mention of this confession of sins as made before the celebration of the Eucharist: "Meet together on the Lord's Day (Sunday), break bread and give thanks after confessing your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure."

³ Cf. St. Ambrose, *In Lucam*, II, 2.

⁴ 1 Clem. lxii, 2.

Humility begets peace and gentleness. Where it prevails, there, too, will be found fair-mindedness, long-suffering, and obedience.¹ It is potent with God,² and "Christ belongs to the humble, and not to those who exalt themselves above His flock. The sceptre and majesty of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, came not with a train of haughtiness and pride . . . but with humility of mind, as the Holy Spirit foretold of Him. . . . If the Lord thus abased Himself, what ought not we to do, we who come through Him under the yoke of His grace?"³

Humility puts everyone in his place and inclines us to obey God. The ordered harmony of the world affords us a wonderful example of obedience and submission to the laws of the Creator: "The heavens, set in motion by His command, obey Him in peace. Day and night fulfil the course He has laid down for them without interfering with one another. The sun, the moon, and the groups of stars follow according to His ordinance in harmony and without deviation the orbits He has prescribed for them. The fruitful earth in obedience to His will brings forth in due season an abundance of food for man and brute, and for all the creatures that live thereon. . . . The vast sea, confined within the bed which His creative hand has hollowed out, breaks not the bounds that He has set, but as He hath ordained, no farther doth it go. He hath said unto it: *Thus far shalt thou go, and here shall thy waves be broken in thy bosom.* . . . The seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter peacefully succeed one another. The winds in their abodes fulfil their functions at the appointed times undisturbed; the never-failing springs, made for man's refreshment and health, offer him an inexhaustible life-giving flow of life. . . . The sovereign Creator and Master of the universe hath ordained that all these things should abide in peace and concord."⁴

Christian society, like civil society, has its hierarchy. There can be no peace and concord in it unless "each man yields to his neighbour according to the gift wherewith he has been endued." In an army are to be found not only commanders, but soldiers too; each one according to his rank carries out the orders that are given. The different orders of society depend upon one another just as the members of our bodies "all concur to promote the health of the whole body by their unanimous subordination to one another."⁵

But obedience, concord, and peace are incapable of really existing without charity, without "the devout and holy practice of fraternal charity." Clement celebrates this virtue in moving words which are an echo of the well-known passage

¹ *Id.*, xiii to xv.

² 1 Clem. xxi, 8.

³ *Id.*, xvi, 1-2, 17. Hemmer, *Apostolic Fathers*, II, 39-41.

⁴ *Id.*, Hemmer, pp. 47-49.

⁵ 1 Clem. xxxvii.

of St. Paul which we have already quoted: "Who can explain the bond of divine charity? Who can express its utter beauty? The height to which charity uplifts us is ineffable. Charity binds us closely to God; *charity covereth the multitude of sins, it suffereth all things, beareth all things*; in charity there is nothing that is base, nothing that is lofty; charity leads not to schism, fomenteth not sedition; charity doth all things in harmony; charity consummates the perfection of all the elect of God; without charity nothing pleaseth God. It is by charity that the Master hath raised us unto Himself; it was because of His charity towards us that our Lord Jesus Christ obeyed the will of God and gave His blood for us, His flesh for our flesh, His soul for our souls. See, my beloved, how great and wonderful a thing is charity, how there are no words to express its perfection."¹

Clement and the Roman Christians excelled in the practice of this charity of which they spoke so well. Immediately after the Domitian persecution they prayed for the Roman emperors in their liturgical gatherings in these touching words: "Make us submissive to Thy most mighty and excellent name, to our princes and governors in this world. For Thou, O Master, hast given them the power of reigning by Thy glorious and unspeakable might, in order that, knowing the glory and honour Thou hast assigned to them, we should obey them and not contradict Thy will. O Lord, grant unto them health, peace, concord, and stability, that they may wield without hindrance the sovereignty which Thou hast given them. For Thou, Master, and heavenly King of all the ages, givest unto the sons of men glory, honour and power over the things of the earth. Guide Thou, O Lord, their counsels according to that which is good, according to that which is pleasing in Thy sight, so that they may use with reverence in peace and mildness the power which Thou hast given them, and enjoy Thy favour."²

Moreover, it is charity, mainspring of the union which should rule between the faithful and their pastors, which St. Ignatius preaches along with integrity of faith to the churches of Asia Minor disturbed by heresy and attempts to create schism. "Faith and charity are the beginning and the end of life; faith is the beginning, charity is the completion; the two combined are God Himself; all the other virtues follow in their train in the path that leads to perfection (*εἰς καλοκάγαθίαν*)."³

But the practice of the Christian virtues is impossible without a struggle. We must not forget that here the Christian is in the circumstances of a fighter, as St. Paul

¹ *Id.*, xlix to l, 1. Hemmer, II, pp. 101, 103.

² 1 Clem. lx, 4 to lxi, 2 Hemmer, II, pp. 127, 128.

³ *Ad Eph* xiv, 1, 2

says: "Brethren, let us strive, knowing the fray is at hand, and that into fights for things perishable many a fighter rushes headlong, but only he is crowned who has done his part therein and fought with glory. Let us so fight that we may be crowned. Let us run the straight road to the fight that is imperishable; let us enter into the fray in large numbers, and let us give battle so that we may be crowned."¹

The good soldier of Christ ought to be detached from this world's goods; he should look upon them as shackles that hamper the activity of the fighter and paralyze the dash of the intrepid runner.²

It is the martyr who is above all a fighter; he must have in a high degree those virtues that guarantee victory, courage, Christian energy, patience, and self-abnegation so far as to be ready to make a generous sacrifice of his life.

The ecclesiastical writers of the first three centuries constantly preach these virtues to the many Christians who were wallowing in dungeons, waiting to be brought before the courts to hear their sentence of death.

Tertullian, in his eloquent exhortation *To Martyrs*, encourages and gives consolation to the Christians of Carthage whom the governor of Africa has flung into prison about 197. In a style that appears full of paradox, after the manner of Silvio Pellico, he exhorts them to love their captivity. To the Christian is not this world a more unwholesome prison than the most frightful dungeon? Therein the darkness that blinds the hearts of men is thicker, the chains that load their souls are heavier, the impurities—that is to say, the passions of men, are more revolting, the number of the guilty is larger. And it is no proconsul, it is God Himself who will judge the world. Only he who longs for the goods of this world could become downhearted in his prison, where he is screened from scandals and temptations and evil memories. "A prison provides the Christian with the same advantages as a desert gives to a prophet."³ Be not then downhearted, ye blessed martyrs, who are imprisoned for Christ's sake!

Furthermore, the sufferings endured in gaols are an excellent training for torture. The soldier trains for war by privations, living a hard life, and by painful exercises. "Blessed martyrs, look upon every hardship you have to endure as fitted to develope in you virtues of soul and body.

¹ 2a Clem. vii, 1-3. Hemmer, II, 145, 147.

² 2a Clem. v, 5, 6. Cf. vi, 6: "We think it is better to hate the perishable goods of this world, because they are second-rate, transitory and corruptible, in order to love those others which are incorruptible" (Hemmer, 145).

³ *Ad Martyr.*, 2.

You are about to take up the good fight in which the living God will award the prize. . . . Christ Jesus, who has anointed you with the Holy Spirit, has willed before the day of battle to take away your freedom and to deal with you stoutly to toughen your strength. Athletes, as we know, in order to harden themselves, withdraw from their fellows to undergo a régime of greater severity. They abstain from all indulgence, all dainty fare, and all too pleasant drink. They do themselves violence, undergo pain, tire themselves out, being surer of winning the more thoroughly they are trained. And yet all this is, as the Apostle says (1 Cor. ix. 25) *that they may receive a corruptible crown: but we an incorruptible one*. Let us then regard the prison as the place where we are trained to suffer, that we may be broken in to it when we are led forth to the tribunal. For a hard life increases virtue, softness on the contrary destroys it."¹

St. Cyprian, too, had to prepare the Christians of Carthage to fight for the faith. During the short persecution of the emperor Gallus (252) he published his *Exhortation to Martyrs*, in which he develops the ideas of his master Tertullian. But he is not so austere. He makes use especially of the reward promised to the martyr to try to detach men's souls from this world. If it is a glorious thing for a soldier to return in triumph to his fatherland after defeating the enemy, how much greater and more to be envied must be the glory of him who enters heaven in triumph after casting down the devil, who offers to the Lord the well-pleasing gift of an unstained faith, who becomes a co-heir with Christ and an equal of the angels, who shares in the happiness of heaven with the patriarchs, Apostles, and prophets! Can any persecution triumph over such hopes as these?²

It is this greatness of the reward also, due to the martyr, that Origen accentuates when he is encouraging his friends, Ambrose and Proctetus, who were "severely tried" in the persecution of Maximinian of Thrace (235-237). He speaks

¹ *Ad Martyr.*, 3.

² *Ad Fortunatum, de exhort. ad martyr.*, 13 (Hartel, I, 346). St. Cyprian adds finely: *Cluduntur in persecutiones terrae, sed patet coelum: minatur antichristus, sed Christus tuetur: mors infertur, sed immortalitas sequitur: occiso mundus eripitur, sed restituto paradiscus exhibetur: vita temporalis extinguitur, sed aeternitas repraesentatur. Quanta est dignitas et quanta securitas exire hinc laetum, exire inter pressuras et angustias gloriosum, cludere in momento oculos, quibus homines videbantur et mundus, aperire eisdem statim, ut Deus videatur et Christus. Tam feliciter migrandi quanta velocitas! Terris repente subtraheris, ut in regnis coelestibus reponaris. Haec oportet mente et cogitatione complecti, haec die ac nocte meditari. Si talem persecutionem invenerit Dei militem, vinci non poterit virtus ad proelium prompta. Vel si arcessitio ante praevenierit, sine praemio non erit fides quae erat ad martyrium praeparata: sine damno temporis merces Deo iudicio redditur: in persecutione militia, in pace conscientia coronatur.*

to the martyr of the joy of suffering for Christ with a delirious enthusiasm: "I want you throughout your fight as martyrs to keep in mind the great reward that awaits in heaven those who endure persecution and insults for the sake of justice and the Son of Man (Matt. v. 11, 12); and rejoice, exult, and leap for joy, even as the Apostles *rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus* (Acts v. 41)."¹

Constant persecutions, or at any rate perpetual threats of persecution, made life very hard for the Christians of the first centuries. Like St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 31), they had to "die daily." Hence they had to exercise that form of courage that is called patience.

Patience, in the etymological sense of the word (*patiens, patior*), is the virtue whereby we can endure the evils and sufferings of life with constancy and resignation. And it was this that Tertullian, the least patient of men, took such pains to make clear to the martyrs in a beautiful treatise.

Patience, says he, wins the approbation of everybody and has no opponents. The pagans, who disagreed with one another about everything else, united in their praises of this virtue. Theirs, indeed, was a false patience prompted by vainglory.² God Himself gives us an example of patience; He puts up with us in spite of our faults. During His mortal life Christ was patient with His Apostles, and especially with his persecutors.³ The benefits of patience are supremely to be desired: it tries faith, it teaches us to despise the goods of this world and to endure wrongs. It mitigates the grief we feel on the death of our relations, it stifles the desire for revenge.⁴ It is a never-failing spring of strength and courage, the mother of all other virtues.⁵ Patience is "so indispensable for all that unites us with God that he who has it not is unable to keep a single divine commandment and to do any work that pleases the Lord."⁶ . . . In short, every sin must in some way or other be attributed to impatience."⁷

Such remarks as these would appear to be altogether exaggerated, if we forget that Tertullian means by patience the courageous endurance of whatever is against the grain in any act of virtue. St. Cyprian, following his master's example, dwells at great length upon the *Benefits of Patience* in this sense. Being patient thus becomes an indispensable

¹ *Exhort. ad Martyr.*, 4 (P.G. XI, 568).

² *De patientia*, 1.

³ *Id.*, 2, 3.

⁴ *Id.*, 6-10.

⁵ *Id.*, 13, 14.

⁶ *Id.*, 1.

⁷ *Id.*, 5.

condition not only of Christian perfection, but also for the fulfilment of the essential duties of a Christian.¹

Of this strength-producing patience the people of Carthage stood in sore need during the plague that decimated them in the summer of 252. To raise their courage Cyprian wrote his fine treatise *De Mortalitate* for those who were bereaved to read and meditate upon. In it are to be found most beautiful thoughts on detachment from this world and longing for heaven: "The kingdom of God, my beloved brethren, draweth nigh. . . . Already heaven is taking the place of earth, that which is great comes after that which was little, the eternal follows upon the transitory. Why should we be anxious or disturbed? Who could be depressed and down-cast, unless he had neither faith nor hope? He alone is afraid of death who does not want to go to Christ. And he alone does not want to go to Christ who will not reign with Christ."²

And then with much eloquence St. Cyprian sets forth the reasons why we should not cling to earth, but yearn to reach heaven. On this earth there are daily conflicts with devils and our own passions; the soul is in constant danger of offending God. Here there are nothing but sorrows and tribulations. In heaven we are protected from the snares of hell; sin is no longer to be dreaded. "When those dear to us leave this world we should rather rejoice than grieve."³ . . . They are delivered from life as it now is."⁴

It is through death that we cross to immortality. Here our end is a crossing.⁵ We are visitors and strangers upon earth. Let us hold on to the day that shall determine the final abode of each one of us.⁶ Heaven is our fatherland where our relations and friends are expecting us, full of anxiety as to our salvation. How can we fail to desire soon to go and

¹ *Patientia est quae nos Deo commendat et servat: ipsa est quae iram temperat, quae linguam frenat, quae mentem gubernat, pacem custodit, disciplinam regit, libidinis impetum frangit, tumoris violentiam comprimit, incendium simultatis extinguit, coercet potentiam divitum, inopiam pauperum refouet, tuetur in virginibus beatam integritatem, in viduis laboriosam castitatem, conjunctis et maritatis individuum caritatem. Facit humiles in prosperis, in adversis fortes, contra injurias et contumelias mites. Docet delinquentibus cito ignoscere, si ipse delinquas, diu et multum rogare. Tentationes expugnat, persecutiones tolerat, passiones et martyria consummat. Ipsa est quae fidei nostrae fundamenta firmiter munit. Ipsa est quae incrementa spei sublimiter provehit. Ipsa actum dirigit, ut tenere possimus viam Christi, dum per ejus tolerantiam gradimur. Ipsa efficit ut perseveremus filii Dei, dum patientiam Patris imitatur (De bono patient. 20). Tunc enim demum sermo et ratio salutaris efficaciter discitur, si patienter quod dicitur audiat (id., 1). In his *On Jealousy and Envy*, St. Cyprian similarly shows that these two vices are the source of almost all sins (Hartel, I, 420-432).*

² *De mortal.*, 3. Cf. *De Imit. Christi*, i, 23.

³ *Id.*, 7.

⁴ *Id.*, 15.

⁵ *Id.*, 22.

⁶ *Id.*, 26.

rejoin them?¹ Moreover, were it not wanting in submissiveness to God to die regretful and resisting the ordering of Providence? "How improper and inconsistent were it on our part, if we ask first that God's will may be done, and then, when He calls us to leave this world, hesitate to obey His orders! We resist and argue, and, like rebellious servants, with gloom and grief go into the presence of God. We leave this world under compulsion and not moved thereto by a spontaneous impulse of the heart. We desire, too, to get honours and rewards from Him to whom we go with regret."²

We should have but a very incomplete idea of the spirituality of this period if we did not note the altogether preponderating position which the person of Christ holds in it. The strong relief into which the Lord is thrown by St. Paul and the other Apostles in their epistles is also to be seen in the writings of their immediate successors. Jesus is constantly set before the faithful as a pattern for the Christian and as the ideal of sanctity. Whenever a Christian virtue is spoken of, it is pointed out in Jesus Christ. The faithful must study this divine model without ceasing, and endeavour to reproduce in themselves a true likeness of it.³ They must "take their marching orders under the leadership" of Christ,⁴ sure in following such a captain of winning a victory over their own selfishness.

Jesus was to the first Christians no abstract ideal. The very definite feeling of His presence in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful was everywhere displayed. The outward and striking return of Christ not being realized, as so many expected,⁵ more especial attention was given to His spiritual and mysterious presence in the soul.

The letters of Ignatius of Antioch contain a most energetic affirmation of this supernatural presence of Jesus within us.

¹ *De mortalitate*, 26: *Patriam nos nostram paradisum computamus, parentes patriarchas habere jam coepimus: quid non properamus et currimus, ut patriam nostram videre, ut parentes salutare possimus? Magnus illic nos carorum numerus expectat, parentum, fratrum, filiorum frequens nos et copiosa turba desiderat jam de sua incolumitate secunda, adhuc de nostra salute sollicita. Ad horum conspectum et complexum venire quanta et illis et nobis in commune laetitia est, qualis illic caelestium regnorum voluptas sine timore moriendi et cum aeternitate vivendi, quam summa et perpetua felicitas! . . . Ad hos, fratres dilectissimi, avida cupiditate properemus, ut dum his cito esse, ut cito ad Christum venire contingat optemus.*

² *Id.*, 18.

³ Polycarp, *Ad Philipp.* viii.

⁴ *Clem.* xxxvii. 1.

⁵ This was the belief in the *parousia*, fairly common in the first and at the beginning of the second century, which looked for Jesus soon to come in triumph back to the earth to judge the world.

It is through our union with Jesus Christ that we shall get true life.¹ This union is effected mainly by the Eucharist, which makes the Christian incorruptible in the world, and immortal in spite of all the deadly influences with which he is surrounded. The eucharistic flesh of Christ is in fact "a medicine of immortality, an antidote to death, to make us live for ever in Jesus."²

Similar teaching is to be found in St. Irenaeus a century later. The Word became incarnate on purpose to impart immortality and incorruptibility to human nature. In uniting with our nature the Word "summed up" all of us in Himself, and united with each one of us.³ Through the simple fact of the incarnation close and intimate ties bind the Christian to Christ. The close union between Christ and Christians and His presence in them give them the strength to persevere in humility and in complete purity and perfect temperance of body and soul.⁴ With the help of Jesus they will triumphantly repel all the assaults of the prince of this world and finally rejoice in God.⁵ Christ, who is present in the faithful and in their ecclesiastical chiefs, gives unity to the Church, for "wherever Christ is, there is the Church universal."⁶

This feeling, I might say strong sense, of the presence of Jesus in the faithful appears in an extraordinary way in the case of the martyrs. Those who gave their lives for the sake of Christ were raised to the grace of mystical union, sometimes accompanied with ecstasy. Relations of close intimacy with Christ in His sufferings were the stay of the martyrs who partook of His passion under torture.⁷ In the hour of torment they were conscious that the "Saviour was by their side and held communion with them."⁸ This supernatural favour made them almost insensible to pain. Blandina, the heroine of Lyons in the persecution of 177, in the midst of the frightful tortures inflicted upon her "no longer felt what was taking place through her hope and expectation of what Christ had promised and through her intercourse with Him."⁹

Martyrs sometimes had the sweet and comforting impres-

¹ *Ad Eph.* xi, 1.

² *Id.*, xx, 2.

³ *Adv. Her.* iii, 16, 6; 18, 1, 7; 19, 1. On the Irenaeian doctrine of ἀνακεφαλαιώσις (summation) see Tixeront, *Histoire des dogmes*, I, 256 ff.

⁴ Ignatius, *Ad Eph.* x. Cf. *Ad Magn.* xii.

⁵ *Ad Magn.* i.

⁶ *Ad Smyrn.* viii.

⁷ *Martyrdom of St. Polycarp*, i, 49.

⁸ *Id.*, ii, 2: The martyrs "let all men see . . . that in their torments they had somehow left their bodies, or rather that the Lord was near them and communing with them."

⁹ *Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons*, Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, V. Cf. p. 22.

sion that Christ suffered in them, and in some measure in their stead. St. Felicitas, martyred at Carthage at the beginning of the third century, told her gaolers while she was in prison that when she was under torture Jesus would be in her and would suffer for her.¹ Sanctus, deacon of Lyons, endured his torments with such courage because "Christ . . . suffered in him."²

These supernatural graces, which God bestowed upon His martyrs, were a foretaste of the beatific union in heaven. To be united with Christ in the heavenly country was the supreme desire of the faithful confessors of the faith and the unfaltering mainstay of their courage. Like Paul, they wished to leave this world to be with Christ. This wonderful spirit in the martyrs was expressed in stirring and enthusiastic terms by Ignatius of Antioch in his famous *Epistle to the Romans*. The open-hearted martyr begs the faithful of the city of Rome, where he was going to be given over to the wild beasts, to do nothing to save him from death :

"Brethren, I beseech you, show no unseasonable kindness towards me. Let me be the food of the wild beasts by which I can attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and I am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts to become the most pure bread of Christ. Rather fondle the wild beasts for them to be my grave and leave nothing over of my body, so that it may cost no one anything to bury me. I shall be a true disciple of Christ when the world cannot even see my body any more. Pray to Christ to grant that by the teeth of the wild beasts He may make me a victim unto God. . . . Ah, when shall I get to the wild beasts which are awaiting me? May they fling themselves upon me at once! If I must, I will fondle them to get them to devour me immediately, and not to do as in the case of some whom they did not dare to touch. And if they will not touch me, I will compel them. Be indulgent to me, I know what is best for me. Now it is that I am beginning to be a disciple of Christ. Let no creature visible or invisible try in jealousy to snatch me from Jesus Christ. Come fire and cross, fighting tooth and claw with wild beasts, let me be cut to pieces alive, dismembered and disjointed, and my whole body ground to powder, and the cruellest tortures of the devil inflicted upon me, provided that I gain Christ in the end!

¹ *Alius erit in me qui patietur pro me, quia et ego pro illo passura sum. Acta primorum Martyrum* (Ruinart, p. 93, Paris, 1689).

² *Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons*, p. 16 : "The poor body (of Sanctus) bore witness to what he had endured; for it was nothing but wounds and bruises, shrunken, and outwardly it had lost all human shape. But Christ, who suffered in him, wrought great wonders, disarming the enemy, and, as an example to others, showing that there is nothing to fear if one loves the Father, nothing to suffer when Christ's glory is at stake." Cf. St. Cyprian, *Ep. ad martyres et confessores*.

"The whole world would be of no use to me, nor would the kingdoms of the earth. It is more profitable for me to die for Christ Jesus than to reign to the end of the world. I seek for Him who died for us, I desire Him who has risen again for us. The hour in which I am to be born is near. Spare me, brethren, prevent me not from living. . . . Let me reach the light that is pure; there it is that I shall be a man indeed. Keep me not from imitating the passion of my God. If any man has this God within him, let him understand what I desire, and let him show compassion to me, knowing the longing which urges me on. . . ."

"My love for this world has been crucified, and I have no spark remaining within me of the fire for material things; but a *living water* murmurs within me and says in my innermost being: Come unto the Father. No longer do I take any pleasure in corruptible food nor in the attractions of this life. I want *the bread of God* which is the flesh of Jesus Christ of the family of David, I want for drink His blood which is incorruptible love. I want no longer to live the life of men. . . ."¹

¹ Ignatius, *Ad Rom.* iv to viii.

CHAPTER III

ECCENTRICITIES OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ASCETICISM

ENCRATISM AND MONTANISM—ALEX- ANDRIA'S HETERODOX ASCETICISM; GNOSTICISM AND NEOPLATONISM— THE ASCETICISM OF CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA AND OF ORIGEN.

I.—ENCRATISM AND MONTANISM

FROM the end of the first century Encratism, a rigorist tendency compounded of evil ingredients, almost brought Christian asceticism into discredit and hampered its progress.

The Encratites (ἐγκρατεῖς),¹ *continent* or *abstainers*, claimed to bind all Christians to renounce marriage, to abstain from meat and particularly from wine, as being indispensable conditions of salvation.²

These regulations were more or less consciously connected with suspected notions as to the origin of matter. Without at all admitting the metaphysics of Gnosticism, which regarded material things as the work of an essentially evil principle, Encratism came to the same practical conclusion; that the flesh should be destroyed by the renunciation of marriage, and by giving it up as far as possible by means of the strictest abstinence.

The spirit of Encratism spread in the Christian communities of the second century thanks to the writings, tainted with heresy, which swarmed at this time, such as the *Acta Apostolorum apocrypha*.³ In many of these pious disquisitions of a romantic type we find ascribed to Jesus and His Apostles words quite definitely condemnatory of marriage as well as of the use of meat and wine.⁴

The success attained by this exaggerated asceticism can largely be explained by the ascendancy won by Gnosticism over a great many minds. The austerity of the adherents of some Gnostic sects aroused the admiration of the people, and they ran the risk of being perverted by it. On the other

¹ Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 28 (P.G. VII, 690). Tixeront, *Histoire des Dogmes*, I, 208.

² St. Irenaeus, *id.* Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* iii, 13, 14 (P.G. VIII, 1192). *Philosophoumena* viii, 16, 20.

³ Lipsius and Bonnet's edition, 1891-1898.

⁴ Cf. *Acta Pauli et Theclae*, 5, 6, 12, 25. *Martyrium B. Petri* 1-4. *Acta Joannis*, 63. *Acta Thomae*, Ed. Bonnet, p. 73.

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hand, could orthodox Christians allow themselves to be out-distanced in asceticism by heretics? If they were less austere than the latter, would they not be discredited? Lastly, the energetic reaction of Christianity against pagan conduct agreed very well with the excesses of Encratism. Was not the best way to keep pure, to avoid and, if need be, to condemn all carnal intercourse, and all that had any appearance even of defilement? If we examine the character of the Christians of the second century, we understand the popularity of certain encratic practices and the sympathy with which they were regarded by some of the ecclesiastical writers of that time.¹

But the Church is an enemy of all extremes. If she approves, as we have seen, of asceticism within reasonable limits when freely undertaken, she condemns all indiscreet endeavours to lay it upon all men. Nor will she permit the ascetic to pronounce to be evil that of which he deprives himself by supererogatory abstinence.

Already had St. Paul warned his disciple Timothy against "speakers of lies in hypocrisy" who "forbid to marry, and to use meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving by the faithful."² Nor did the authorized teachers of the Church hold any other language. We may attain salvation either by the common way of the faithful who are satisfied with keeping the Gospel precepts, or by the less beaten path of the counsels. The ascetic who desires to follow the latter will bind himself to continence and embrace the state of virginity, but he will not condemn marriage on that account. Marriage is a good thing and according to God's will, and it is for the majority. "When the Word of God," says Methodius, "introduced virginity into the world, He did not at all intend to do away with matrimony. . . . The command in Genesis: *Increase and multiply*, was not abolished. . . . In marriage God associates man with His own creative work."³ According to the happy dictum of the *Apostolical Constitutions*, ascetics make vows of virginity "not to condemn matrimony, but to have more leisure for prayer."⁴

This doctrine was the rule of conduct of orthodox Christians. The bishops who deviated from it were reproved. Eusebius⁵ tells us that at Cnossa in Crete there was a bishop named Pinytos, who tried to impose celibacy upon all the faithful without distinction. He was severely censured.

¹ For instance, Tertullian, *De exhort. castit.* 9. Clement of Alexandria and Origen did not always speak rightly of Encratism.

² 1 Tim. iv, 2-3.

³ *The Feast of Virgins*, ii, 1, 2 (P.G. XVIII, 48, 49).

⁴ viii, 24 (Ed. Funk, I, 528).

⁵ *Hist. Eccl.* IV, 23.

Likewise complete and obligatory abstinence from certain foods was rebuked. Everyone was free to live soberly and not to partake of certain viands; and the monks made large use of this right. In the persecution of 177, Alcibiades, a martyr of Lyons, persuaded, at any rate by example, his companions to abstain from certain foods. "He led an altogether austere life, at first making no change in it, and being satisfied with bread and water. But . . . it was revealed that Alcibiades did not do well in not making use of God's creatures, and in giving an occasion of scandal to others. Alcibiades complied, and made use of everything indifferently, thanking God. For the martyrs were not bereft of the grace of God, but the Holy Spirit was their counsellor."¹

Thus from the beginning Encratism was regarded with suspicion by the heads of the Church. Again and again it met with formal disapproval, and finally, at the commencement of the third century, it was put on the list of heresies.²

Again we meet with these rigorist tendencies in Montanism, a heterodox religious movement which arose in Phrygia in the second century.³ Montanus, its founder, united with an exaggerated asceticism a false mysticism. The Montanist heresy takes after illuminism. Furthermore, it is—what false mysticism is at all times—a revolt of private enlightenment against ecclesiastical authority.

Montanus and his two helpers, the prophetess Priscilla and Maximilla, claimed to be endowed with the gift of prophecy which was possessed by many Christians in Apostolic times. This pretended gift showed itself in strange ways. The new prophets only uttered their oracles in ecstasies and delirious transports which deprived them of reason. The ecstasy of the prophet appeared to destroy his or her personality. A divine inspirer, the Paraclete, they said, did violence to them and spoke through their lips. After Tertullian had become a Montanist, he knew of no other kind of ecstasy than that of Montanus. He likens it to madness.⁴ According to him, it is an impetuous irruption into the prophet of the Holy Spirit, and an essential condition for the exercise of the gift of prophecy.⁵ Tertullian no doubt set forth these characteristics of Montanist ecstasy in his lost treatise *De Ecstasi*. These extraordinary and extravagant characteristics of

¹ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* V, 3 (J. Pourrat, p. 23).

² The writer of the *Philosophoumena* (viii, 20), who wrote about 230, condemns Encratism on the same ground as the other heresies of which he gives a list and a refutation. Cf. St. Epiphanius, *Haereses*, 46, 47, 61.

³ From Phrygia Montanism spread to other regions, specially to Africa, where it won Tertullian. It also gained adherents at Lyons.

⁴ *Ecstasim dicimus excessum sensus et amentiae instar* (*De An.* 45).

⁵ *Exstasis . . . Sancti Spiritus vis, operatrix prophetiae* (*id.*, 11).

Montanist ecstasy remind one of demoniacal possession and of the convulsions that occurred in the eighteenth century at the grave of the Jansenist deacon Paris.

By such extravagances and by the austerity of his sect, Montanus succeeded in imposing upon the multitude. He thus pretended that he was inaugurating the reign of the Paraclete, who was revealing Himself to mankind according to the predictions of the Gospel of St. John. The end of the world and the coming of Christ were nigh. The heavenly Jerusalem would soon be seen descending upon earth.

The preaching of the false prophets worked up the Christians of Phrygia and Asia to a state of extreme exaltation. The churches were profoundly unsettled by it, and the bishops had to intervene. To the illuminism of the new prophets they opposed the traditional idea of prophecy. The prophets of the Old and New Testaments were not in a state of ecstasy when they spoke. They retained the sense and use of their personality when they prophesied. They showed nothing like the fits of delirium of the Montanist leaders.¹ Furthermore, in the prophetic visions or revelations with which the Catholic martyrs were blessed, as in the case of St. Perpetua at Carthage² and of the martyrs of Lyons, there was nothing like the convulsions of the Montanists. The followers of Montanus were finally excommunicated, and at the beginning of the third century Montanus had to break with the Church to become a Montanist.

In anathematizing Montanism, the Church rebuked false mysticism; just as in condemning Encratism she rejected exaggerated asceticism. And this is invariably her attitude towards all movements of asceticism or mysticism which are in excess, unruly, or out of harmony with the traditional guidance of her hierarchy. She treats them as a counterfeit of real spirituality.

II.—ALEXANDRIA'S HETERODOX ASCETICISM : GNOSTICISM AND NEOPLATONISM

THESE tendencies running counter to the traditional teaching of the Church prove that in the second century Christian asceticism was already strongly attracting general attention. The meeting of Hellenic philosophy with Christianity was about to raise it in the eyes of ecclesiastical writers to a level of much higher importance.

About a century before the birth of the Christian era idealist and moral tendencies had revealed themselves in the Greco-Roman world, especially at Alexandria. Philosophy

¹ See Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* IV, 27; V, 16, 19.

² *Acta S. Perpetuae*, 4 ff. Ruinart, p. 87.

had failed in its attempts to explain the universe; what was asked of it henceforth was to lay down rules of conduct. A very great number of people, it is true, discouraged at the outset and despairing of finding among the philosophers the guidance they required, lulled themselves into a luring scepticism, or else followed the easy morality of Epicurus. But many of them had a far higher ideal. Convinced eclectics, in the most unlike philosophical systems they tried to find the elements for a fresh synthesis, suited to their aspirations. This syncretism of a clearly moral and practical tendency, was very much in vogue until the middle of the third century. Platonism and Stoicism furnished it with its principal ingredients.

Dualism, or a belief in an irreducible opposition between spirit and matter, was the fundamental dogma of the new philosophy. It is the duty of man to despise material things and to free himself from the senses by the practice of asceticism. A moral rôle of great potency was attributed to knowledge or science. Asceticism and knowledge will deliver the philosopher from the servitude of the body and bring him to calmness (*ἀπάθεια*), the perfect serenity of the soul that makes him like unto God, and which had been so eloquently commended by the philosopher Seneca († 65).¹

Mysticism, a mysticism based upon pantheism, is also one of the features of this philosophical movement. Men tried to find means of entering into direct communion with God—whether He were transcendent or immanent, according to the various schools of divinity—and believed they had found them in the new philosophy. If God transcends the universe, man's soul, which comes down from Him by a descending emanation, will return to Him by an ascending retrogression to become one with Him once more. If, on the contrary, God is one with the world, the spirit of man is a part of the divine Soul of the universe which animates all things, *mens agitat molem*; it will be enough to be alive to be in the divine.

These rather incoherent and confused theories prevailed pretty generally, but mainly in Alexandria, at that time the most famous centre of intellectual activity. They could not help coming into contact with Christianity.

The Christian religion, too, implies a kind of antagonism

¹ *De vita beatâ*, iv: *Quid enim prohibet nos beatam vitam dicere liberum animum et erectum et interritum et stabilem, extra metum, extra cupiditatem positum?*—*De constantia sapientis*, viii: *Non potest ergo quisquam aut nocere sapienti, aut prodesse; quemadmodum divina nec juvari desiderant, nec laedi possunt; sapiens autem vicinus proximisque diis consistit, excepta mortalitate, similis Deo. Cf. De tranquillitate animi*, 14. Martínez, p. 119.

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between soul and body. In the Christian there are two opposing principles, which St. Paul calls "the law of the members" and "the law of the mind."¹ The one is strongly inclined to evil, the other incessantly seeks after the good. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit: and the spirit against the flesh."²

To "walk in the spirit,"³ to free oneself from the senses to go to God, it is necessary to mortify the flesh and to practise, at any rate to some extent, asceticism.

Christianity finds in the doctrine of the fall of man an explanation of this anomalous state of human nature. In the first man, as he came from the hands of his Creator, there was an entire harmony between body and soul. This harmony was destroyed by sin. The soul has ceased to be mistress of the body, and it is only by the laborious practice of mortification that she can keep or bring it back to the path of duty. This explanation furnished by the Christian faith could not satisfy many minds in the second century who had faith in nothing beyond philosophy.

The metaphysical principles of gnostic asceticism must be looked for in the Alexandrian Judaism of which Philo⁴ is the great representative.

Philo endeavoured to reconcile Judaism with Hellenism. God is infinite and eternal. Contrasted with Him is matter, co-eternal with Himself, on which He acts by means of divine intermediaries which remind one of the ideas of Plato. The Word is the chief of these mediators.

Men's souls are some of these divine beings imprisoned in animated bodies. Man, according to the Greek trichotomy, is compounded of body (*σῶμα*), animating principle (*ψυχή*) and a spiritual and divine principle (*πνεῦμα*). From the fundamental opposition between this divine principle and the body arises the conflict in man between the spirit and the flesh. The chief means of triumphing over the tyranny under which the body rules the soul is asceticism combined with knowledge. The soul thus purified will return to God after death. In this life she may attain to Him in a transient manner in ecstasy.

Gnosticism accentuates the Philonian dualism by introducing it into the divine, and by putting the God of the Old Testament in opposition to the God of the New. Here we need not set forth its fanciful theodicy with its interminable genealogies of aeons and divine beings. Only its anthropology and doctrine as to salvation concern us now.

The Gnostics divide men into three essentially different categories, which are more or less perfect according to the creative principle from which each of them proceeds: The

¹ Rom. vii, 23.

² Gal. v, 17.

³ *Id.*, v, 16.

⁴ A philosopher of Alexandria, born about 20 B.C.

spiritual or *pneumatici*, in whom spiritual substance is infused : these are the higher class of men, who are irrevocably predestined to be saved, whatever they may do on earth. Then come the *psychic* men, animated by a soul, an immaterial principle : they cannot be saved except by God's help. Lastly, the *hylici* (*ὑλικοί*), entirely and exclusively material men, who are inevitably destined to annihilation like the matter of which they are made.

In the spiritual and in the psychic men there are therefore immaterial principles of the divine lost in matter, and these are redeemable. Christ came into the world to set them free. This deliverance is wrought by gnosis, or higher religious knowledge, and by enfranchising asceticism.

The Gnostic philosophy recognizes in human nature no moral solidarity between soul and body. The latter is a prison the doors of which must be broken open, and it is the object of asceticism to endeavour to annihilate the flesh. This rigorist tendency is found in many of the Gnostic¹ sects. But other Gnostic theorists, celebrated for their immorality,² came to a different conclusion. This moral independence of the spirit with regard to the body justified all kinds of failings.

Error somehow rarely fails to lead to libertinage.

Nevertheless, on parallel lines with Gnosticism, which was a hybrid mixture of Judaism, Hellenism, and Christianity, the purely philosophic movement persisted and grew. Those who led it had not been in any way in touch with the Jewish and Christian religions. The *Manual of Epictetus*³ and the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius († 180)—books sometimes quoted by the Christian ascetics of the future—are the results of this inquiry.

The various doctrines then taught ended by being gathered into a philosophico-religious system known as Neoplatonism. The Neoplatonic school which undertook this synthesis was founded at Alexandria by Ammonius Saccas († 242), and afterwards led with distinction by the famous Plotinus (205-270). A man of austere life who practised what he preached, Plotinus esteemed ideas alone as of any importance, and had a profound disdain for literature. His lectures were gathered together and published under the title of *Enneades* by one of his disciples, Porphyry (233-305). There we find Neoplatonism reduced to form.

The Neoplatonist asceticism sets before the philosopher as his end union with God ; that is to say, with the first cause of

¹ The sects of Saturninus, Cerdo, and Marcion.

² Amongst others the Alexandrian Gnostics Basilides, Valentinus, and Carpocrates.

³ Epictetus, a Stoic philosopher of the first century.

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the world. This union is effected by a lengthy process, of which the following gives the various stages :

There are three divine principles flowing from one another : Being-in-itself, indeterminate, unknowable, universal, the All ; Intelligence or Mind (*νοῦς*), which can be known by man's reason ; and the Soul (*ψυχή*), which animates the world and from which proceed sensible creatures.

Particular souls are emanations from this universal Soul. They are united with the bodies with which they are in perpetual strife. This is the origin of all the evil that there is in the world.

Every soul has to revert to perfection, to the Being-in-itself from which it springs, by an ascending retrogression. Asceticism enables it to set itself free from the fetters of the senses. He who desires to be perfect must subdue his body, restrain his passions, and abstain from sensual pleasures. Thus will his soul be purified and delivered from the sway of matter.

Reflection on one's self, meditation on abstract realities, and, in a word, the study of philosophy, will raise the soul to the region of Mind (*νοῦς*). The philosopher is urgently invited to abandon the phenomenal world and to maintain himself in the spiritual world. Philosophic meditation thus carries on the work of asceticism.

Being-in-itself, the highest perfection, can only be attained by ecstasy. Ecstatic contemplation alone can unite one with God. By contemplation the soul is illuminated, and becomes light and God Himself.

Neoplatonism is a sort of mystical syncretism of Greek philosophies and has nothing Christian about it. It stands for a powerful attempt of Hellenism to transform itself into a religion. It was never a serious danger, as Gnosticism was, to the Church or to Christian asceticism. It was regarded as an exclusively philosophical movement, quite apart from Christianity. But later on it exercised a certain amount of influence over the mind of St. Augustine and of Dionysius the Areopagite, who borrowed some expressions from it and used some of its theories, after having carefully purged and Christianized them, to set forth their mystical theology.

This philosophico-religious syncretism has a greatness of its own. It is a remarkable expression of the endeavours of man's soul to attain to divinity, but to the "unknown" God, so much was He veiled in pantheism.

Certain sides of its asceticism are also worthy of admiration. Its recommendations with regard to the restraint of the passions and the bearing of suffering may call to mind some of the counsels of Christian spirituality, although they are strikingly inferior.

But, as we shall often see, asceticism depends upon the dogmas that it holds; when the dogmas are erroneous, the asceticism by this very fact is vitiated. The dualistic anthropology of the Alexandrian philosophers could not fail to lead to practical results that were fatal. If man's body is radically incapable of being saved, if it is destined, like matter, to annihilation, if the soul has no link of solidarity with it, no doubt one may try to set oneself free from it by asceticism, but one may quite as well abandon it to its depraved instincts.

Christianity, on the other hand, regards the body as the soul's companion, a rebellious companion, that has to be mastered and subdued by mortification to transform it into an instrument of merit and salvation. After death it will rise again to share with the soul in the reward or the penalty which it has merited along with her.

III.—THE ASCETIC THEOLOGY OF CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA AND ORIGEN

- Gnosticism and the various philosophic teachings prevalent
- in Alexandria had to be countered with Christian instruction which was both brilliant and sound. This was the task undertaken by the Christian School of Alexandria, in which Clement and Origen were the most famous masters.

Clement of Alexandria (150-217) lived just when Neoplatonism was in process of formation. A great admirer of the Greek philosophies, Clement was so imbued with them that in his writings we find most of the theories of Plato and the Stoics which were used by Plotinus in the construction of his system. His asceticism, too, is not quite sound, and sometimes it accords ill with the traditional teaching of the Church.

It must not be supposed, however, that Clement accepts philosophic theories just as they came from the minds of their originators. He Christianizes them more or less happily, but always in a spirit of thorough submission to the authority of what he believes to be the ecclesiastical tradition. In the name of this tradition he rejects the pantheism and the dualism that fundamentally underlie the Greek philosophy. And this, failing all else, would be enough to prove that Clement is not, as some assert, a philosopher with no Christianity about him. Christian perfection, according to Clement, consists in "the gnosis or knowledge of the good, and in being like God." This is the very definition which Plato gives of happiness.¹

¹ *Strom.* ii, 22 (P.G. VIII, 1080).

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According to Platonic philosophy, as we have seen, it is knowledge that largely constitutes man's moral worth. We attain to perfection in proportion to the extent of our knowledge of the good. Clement introduces this erroneous principle into his ascetic theology. The more the Christian knows of divine truths, the better will he be in virtue of his knowledge. Hence it is in the first place by this high knowledge of the truths of the faith, by gnosis, that the head of the School of Alexandria educates his hearers in the perfect life of the Christian.

Gnosis, as Clement understands it, is the consummation of faith. The latter makes us accept divine truths but does not reveal their content. Gnosis, however, gives us substantial proof, and a sort of intuition, of them.¹ It raises the soul to the contemplation of heavenly realities, merges it in God and makes it like Him. Thus it is that gnosis purifies and rapidly perfects those who have been "chosen" to receive it.²

For all Christians are not called thereto. For many of them the common faith must suffice, and they must be satisfied therewith. Gnosis is the privilege of those who have the necessary capacities for attaining it. According to the head of the School of Alexandria, faith and gnosis correspond with the two degrees of Christian life: that of ordinary Christians, and that of the perfect.³

Gnosis, or the highest knowledge of the truths of the faith, enables the Christian to reach divine contemplation, of which Clement outlines a theory worthy of note.

According to Neoplatonist principles, God is incomprehensible and inaccessible to reason; and our knowledge of Him can only be negative. "We know rather what He is not than what He is." The nearer we get to Him, the more do we perceive that He is above all our thoughts. Hence, in order to contemplate Him and see Him we must, like Moses, enter into the darkness of the cloud; that is to say, we must get rid of all the thoughts we have of Him as unworthy of Him, and regard with the eyes of faith the supreme Being who infinitely surpasses all our conceptions of Him.⁴

St. Augustine and Dionysius the Areopagite later on reproduced these ideas about contemplation and corrected them, and drew from them the first beginnings of Christian mysticism.

Perfection also consists, according to Clement, in likeness with God. This likeness, begun by gnosis, is gained by the practice of the two virtues; of which the one, altogether Stoical, was insensibility (*ἀπάθεια*); the other, Christian, was

¹ *Strom.* vii, 10 (P.G. IX, 477).

² *Id.*, vi, 10 (P.G. IX, 301). Cf. Martinez, pp. 119, 120.

³ *Id.*, vi, 9, 10. Cf. Tixeront, *Histoire des Dogmes*, I, 273.

⁴ *Strom.* v, 11; ii, 11 (P.G. IX, 109; VIII, 936, 937).

charity. The Gnostic will imitate God as far as possible by becoming completely master of the motions of his soul and by doing good on all sides.¹

By nature God is impassible, and nothing can disturb Him. The Gnostic has to reach a similar impassibility,² striving to attain to the limits of possibility. The likeness to God preached by Clement is not exactly that which the Gospel proposes to the faithful;³ the Gnostic educated in the School of Alexandria owes almost as much to Zeno as to Christ.

The true Gnostic, indeed, is not only freed from the lusts of the flesh, and is not only the master of his passions, but, further, he suffers nothing of the senses in himself. "The only impressions he consents to experience are those that are necessary for the preservation of life, such as hunger and thirst."⁴ Pain and even death will find him indifferent. He will suppress all emotions that are at all perturbing or agitating, such as joy, grief, impatience, anger. He will live in an imperturbable inward calm. He will rise above creatures, and become quite indifferent to what men think or say. In short, he will keep his soul in perfect serenity.⁵

Yet this insensibility is not a lazy carelessness, nor torpor. It is not at all like the *Nirvana* of the Buddhist. On the contrary, it is in harmony—one does not always see how—with the interior operation of the soul which is constantly endeavouring to advance in goodness.⁶ And it is by the practices of asceticism that the Christian will be helped to attain to this entire insensibility,⁷ as well as to ward off temptation and to train himself to bear the inevitable sufferings of this world.⁸ The Stoics counselled temperance to those who desire to attain to *apatheia* (ἀπάθεια). The master of the School of Alexandria makes his appeal to their teaching as much as to that of Christ and His Apostles when he exhorts men to Christian mortification.

The Gnostic will treat the body with hardness. Without being bad in itself, the body is nevertheless the enemy of the soul, a hindrance which it must overcome and the main source of disturbing emotions. To the body must be given only just what suffices to keep it from dying.⁹ Thus the Christian has to mortify his senses and to strip them of all that is pleasing to them. He must contemn riches and luxury. He must abstain, above all, from wine and flesh food so as not to stimulate the passions of the body.¹⁰

¹ *Strom.* ii, 19 (P.G. VIII 1040); vi, 9 (P.G. IX, 294).

² *Id.*, vii, 3 (P.G. IX, 293).

³ *Cf.* Matt. v, 43-48.

⁴ *Strom.* vi, 9 (P.G. IX, 292).

⁵ *Id.*, vii, 11 (P.G., IX, 484, 485).

⁶ *Id.*, vii, 3 (P.G. IX, 425).

⁷ *Id.*, vi, 9 (P.G. IX, 293); ii, 20 (P.G. VIII, 1048).

⁸ *Id.*, vii, 7 (P.G. IX, 465); *Paedag.* iii, 8 (P.G. VIII, 612).

⁹ *Id.*, vi, 9 (P.G. IX, 296).

¹⁰ *Id.*, vii, 6 (P.G. IX, 448). *Cf.* ii, 20.

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One is surprised not to find along with all this austerity urgent exhortation to the practice of virginity. Clement appears to think little of this kind of life. He plainly recognizes the superiority of the state of virginity over that of married life, but for reasons which are poorly known to us, he is bent upon exalting the excellence and dignity of marriage.¹ This attitude, though legitimate in itself, does not, however, square very well with the principles of *apatheia*.

Indeed, the spirituality of Clement is sometimes rather incoherent. And how could it be otherwise when it is a heterogeneous mixture of inconsistent elements? Stoical insensibility, *apatheia*, is not a Christian virtue. Moreover, it is impossible, for, do what one will and whatever austerities one may practise, our passions will never be so far destroyed as not to disturb us.² Christianity binds us to mortification as a necessary means of avoiding evil. But its ideal is far from being a state of soul incapable of emotion. Still less does it condemn suffering, the sanctifying and redemptive value of which, when well borne, it recognizes.

Hence the ascetic theology of Clement is far from perfect. Its best point is its exhortation to the practice of charity. Here the master of the School of Alexandria is in line with the pure evangelical tradition. He who loves his neighbour and does good to him, even when his neighbour is an enemy, is like his Father in heaven, who makes His sun to rise upon the evil and the good. Clement would have the Gnostic do good to all his brethren, and labour for their salvation by prayer, by example, and also in word.³ Prayer is especially commended to him: first of all the common prayer of tierce, sext, and none; and then private prayer, which should be without ceasing.⁴ The Gnostic, too, will love to pray without use of words, lifting up his soul inwardly and silently to God: that which later on was called mental prayer.⁵

Origen, like his master Clement, considers that the quality of the Christian's life is measured by his knowledge. He who has only simple faith (*ψιλή πίστις*) is an ordinary Christian; the perfect Christian, the Gnostic, has a reasoned and scientific knowledge of our dogmas.⁶ Nevertheless, per-

¹ *Strom.* iii, 1, 16; vii, 12.

² Greek spiritual writers subsequently make use of the word *apatheia* to denote the state attained by a Christian who is fully mortified. They use it to express a generally just idea of Christian mortification. Pelagians, on the contrary, gave a Stoic sense to *apatheia*, meaning by it a state of perfection free from passion and also from sin. Therefore, we must not confuse Christian *apatheia*, so often used by Greek ascetic writers, with Pelagian *apatheia*.

³ *Strom.* ii, 17 (P.G. VIII, 1040); vii, 3, 7 (P.G. IX, 417, 449).

⁴ *Id.*, vii, 7. Cf. Martinez, pp. 143, 144.

⁵ *Id.*, vii, 7 (P.G. IX, 460, 461).

⁶ *Contra Celsum*, i, 13 (P.G. XI, 680).

fection does not consist in knowledge but in likeness to God, according to the teaching of those philosophers who found — this doctrine in Genesis (Gen. i. 26, 27).¹ It could not be the result of study nor the outcome of knowledge. It may grow along with knowledge, but it belongs to the moral order and is acquired by personal effort with God's help. Only our good works can effect the divine likeness within us.

Thus is the ascetic teaching of Clement corrected and freed from the philosophical theories that disfigured it. Although he was quite as fond as his master of the philosophers, and believed, as Clement did, that the sound parts of their works were borrowed from Holy Scripture, Origen was more on his guard in dealing with their systems. He shows a certain reserve in his use of philosophy, especially when he has to do with spiritual theology in which elaborate speculations seem to him to be not to the point. Indeed, we may say that he undertook less to propound a theory of asceticism than to draw a portrait of the ascetic: a sketch that he meant to realize in his own life while he was drawing it in his works. Origen is an ascetic, and almost a forerunner of the monks who afterwards peopled the deserts of Egypt.

The Gnostic must in the first place be one of the continent. To encourage the practice of perfect chastity and virginity, Origen praises virgins in terms as enthusiastic as those of St. Cyprian and St. Methodius. So much does he accentuate the superiority of virginity over that of marriage that the latter almost seems to suffer depreciation on that account.² He condemns second marriage.³ Called at eighteen years of age to teach in the famous School of Alexandria amongst mixed audiences, he was apprehensive about his virtue and reputation. He mutilated himself to protect himself from calumny and suspicion:⁴ a culpable act which may be excused on account of his honesty of purpose and love of purity.

Origen's strictness of life and contempt of worldly goods were in harmony with evangelical perfection. What his biographers tell us about him is worthy of the life of an anchorite. He only partook of such food as was indispensable for his body, and drank no wine. He fasted often, slept naked on the ground, and voluntarily exposed himself to the inclemency of the seasons. He tried to reach the ideal of evangelical poverty by stripping himself of his possessions, even his books, and by keeping as his own nothing but the garments that he wore.⁵ Moreover, with what eloquence did

¹ *De Principiis*, iii, 6 (P.G. XI, 333).

² *Cf. In Ep. ad Rom.* vi, 7 (P.G. XIV, 1069 ff.).

³ *Hom. XVII in Lucam* (P.G. XIII, 1846, 1847).

⁴ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* VI, 8.

⁵ *Id.*, VI, 3.

he interpret the words of Jesus on renunciation of this world's goods, on fasting, and on the need of mortification! How much one realizes, in reading his homilies with their wealth of spiritual teaching, that he was himself practising what he preached to others!

He knows how long and hard is the struggle with one's passions. But he earnestly encourages the Christian to undertake it. "You must know," he says, "that the mortification of the flesh requires patience; it is a work that is achieved not all at once but slowly. The resistance of the flesh begins to grow weaker in those who enter upon the Christian life. In those who increase in fervour and receive more abundantly of the Holy Spirit not only do they lose their energy, but they begin to die out. Lastly, they are finally stilled in the perfect, in whom no longer appears any sign of sin, either in their acts or words or thoughts."¹

The ascetic under Origen's training must pray a great deal and give himself up to contemplation. The Church is made up of contemplatives and workers; the ascetic will be among the former. He is raised above the material and the terrestrial. Let him also withdraw as much as possible from worldly business, and create an inward solitude in which he directs his mind to God and contemplates Him, speaks to Him, hearkens to Him, and meditates upon His law day and night.²

This contemplation, to which the ascetic is invited, consists, above all, in the devout study of the word of God combined with prayer.³ It was the contemplation of the anchorite, and it was that of Origen. For this extraordinary man with his astonishing literary activity, the master of the most famous Christian school in the world, who journeyed to Rome, and travelled in Greece and Palestine and Arabia, was a contemplative. He envied the lot of Martha's sister Mary, who sat at the feet of our Saviour to hear His word, and that of John the Baptist, who dwelt in the wilderness, "where the air was purer, the sky more open, and God nearer."⁴

There is no doubt that the ascetic teaching of Origen, his example, and his mighty influence over his disciples, contributed to the origination of monachism in Egypt.

¹ *In Ep. ad Rom.* vi, 14 (P.G. XIV, 1102. Cf. 1086, 1087, 1092).

² *Hom. VI in Levit.* (P.G. XII, 466): *Ideo omni virtute nitendum est ut ab occupationibus saeculi et a mundanis actibus liberi et ipsas, si fieri potest, superfluas sodalium fabulas relinquentes, verbo Dei operam demus et in lege ejus meditemur die ac nocte.* Cf. *Hom. XII in Exod.* 2 (P.G. XII, 383).

³ *Hom. VI in Levit.* 6 (P.G. XII, 475).

⁴ *Hom. XI in Lucam*, (P.G. XIII, 1827): *Joannes . . . abiit in deserta ubi purior aer erat et coelum apertius et familiarior Deus.*

CHAPTER IV

MONACHISM IN THE EAST IN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES

ITS SOURCES AND CHIEF REPRESENTATIVES—THE RULES OF SAINT PACHOMIUS AND SAINT BASIL.¹

I.—THE BEGINNINGS OF EASTERN MONACHISM

CHRISTIANS who desired to live as ascetics and to aim at perfection felt more and more, at the beginning of the fourth century, the need of withdrawing from the world. As long as Christianity was the persecuted and proscribed religion, the fraternity of the faithful was sufficiently protected from temptation from without. On account of the state of hostility between them, Christendom and paganism ran few risks from their contact with one another, and the heads of the churches easily managed to guard ascetics and virgins from pagan influences. But when Constantine's edict gave the franchise to the religion of Christ, when the emperor himself became a

¹ THE PRINCIPAL AUTHORITIES.—A. EGYPTIAN MONACHISM: (i) *Vita Antonii*, by St. Athanasius (P.G. XXVI, 837 ff.). *Vita Pachomii* (P.L. LXXIII, 227 ff.); *Acta Sanctorum*, 14 May, Paris, 1866. *Vita Schnoudi* (see Amélineau's not unbiassed *Mémoires de la mission archéologique du Caire*, t. IV, i). (ii) *The Rule of St. Pachomius* in St. Jerome (P.L. XXIII, 61). (iii) *The Lausiack History of Palladius*, the narrative of a solitary who spent eleven years in Egypt (388-399), and became a bishop. Palladius relates what he saw while visiting the monks and any edifying features he heard told about them. The genuine text of the *Lausiack History* has been published by Dom Butler (*The Lausiack History of Palladius*, Vol. VI of the *Cambridge Texts and Studies* 1898-1904). (iv) *The Historia monachorum*, an account of the visits of seven persons of the Mount of Olives to the solitaries of the Thebaïd and of Lower Egypt during the winter of 394-395. A Latin translation, by Rufinus of Aquileia, of the *Historia monachorum* combined with the *Lausiack History* is given in Migne (P.L. LXXIII). (v) *The Institutes and Conferences* of Cassian, who founded the monasteries of Marseilles. Cassian dwelt in Egypt at the same time as Palladius. About 420-428 he published his recollections of the Egyptian monks. (vi) *Apophthegmata Patrum* or Talks and Tales of the Monks. There are three collections of them: one in Greek (Migne, P.G. LXV, 72 ff.); the two others in Latin, known as the *Vitae Patrum* of Rosweyde, books v, vi, and vii (Migne, P.L. LXXIV). Sequel to the *Vitae Patrum* (P.L. LXXIV).

B. PALESTINIAN MONACHISM: (i) *Life of St. Hilarion*, founder of monasticism in Palestine, by St. Jerome (P.L. XXIII, 29 ff.). (ii)

Christian and pagans were converted in masses, the relaxation of manners set in strongly in Church circles.¹ It was to be feared that when the world became Christian, many Christians would become worldly.² At any rate, the majority were no longer very much in earnest about living consistently according to the Christian ideal. The ascetics and virgins, who were bound to live a holy and pure life, found themselves in fresh conditions of the greatest difficulty.

At the beginning of the fourth century, to guard ascetics and virgins from the dangers that threatened them, many churches bound them to a stricter rule than that of earlier days, and to a style of life which in some respects resembled that of the monks of later times. To submit to it was a condition required for perseverance.³

This rule is set forth, above all, in the treatise *On Virginity*, wrongly attributed to St. Athanasius, in the writings of St. Ambrose for virgins, and in many *Letters* of St. Jerome.

Virgins might go on living in their own homes, but they had to avoid running out unnecessarily, to pray at stated times, to fast and to give alms.⁴

The set prayers consisted in the recitation of the Psalms at the traditional hours of Tierce, Sext, and None, in honour of our Lord's condemnation, crucifixion, and death.⁵ In the night, at the hour of Christ's resurrection, they had to get up to chant Psalms. These various hours were kept in common,

The *Peregrinatio* of Etheria, a pilgrim of the time of Theodosius who visited the monks, especially those of Palestine. Geyer, *Itinera hierosolymitana*. Vienna, 1898. (iii) On the monks of Syria, Theodoret's *Historia religiosa* (P.G. LXXXII, 1283 ff.). Cf. St. John Chrysostom, *Apologia for the Life and Calling of Monks* (P.G. XLVII). *Hom. XIV in 1 Tim. 4; In Matt. Hom. VIII, 4.*

C. MONACHISM IN ASIA MINOR: See the ascetical works of St. Basil. The collected *Works* (Ἀσκητικά) of St. Basil is not entirely authentic; but the two *Rules of the Monastic Life* appear to be indeed by St. Basil (P.G. XXXI). The first or longer Rule, *Regulae fustius tractatae*, comprises fifty-five rules as to the principles of the monastic life. The second or shorter Rule, *Regulae brevius tractatae*, includes three hundred and thirteen answers to various questions regarding the monastic life.

¹ St. Jerome, *Vita S. Malchi monachi*. I (P.L. XXIII, 53): *Et postquam ad christianos principes venerit* (Ecclesia), *potentia quidem et divitiis major, sed virtutibus minor facta sit.* . . .

² Cf. Goyau, *Sainte Mélanie*, p. 150, Paris, 1908.

³ "Happy the virgin who is under rule. She shall be as a fruitful vine in a garden. . . . Unhappy the virgin who has no rule: she is even as a ship without a rudder." Pseudo Athanasius, *De virginitate*, 14 (P.G. XXVIII, 268).

⁴ *De virginitate*, 12. Cf. St. John Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio*. iii, 17.

⁵ *Id.* Cf. St. Jerome, *Ep. CXXX, ad Demetriadem*, 15. Aphraates the Syrian, *Demonstratio XVIII, De virginitate* (Graffin, *Patrologia syriaca*, Vol. I, 815 ff.).

as far as possible, by numbers of virgins who gathered together.¹ In Jerusalem, the continent of both sexes (*apud-tacticae*) met in the church of the *Anastasis* at the same hours of the day and night to recite the Psalms along with the clergy.² In Rome, in the middle of the fourth century, two eminent matrons, Asella and Marcella, assembled in their house on the Aventine virgins and widows to chant Psalms and to study the Holy Scriptures.

To these regular and to some extent obligatory prayers virgins were invited to add others on their own account. Indeed, a virgin ought to pray unceasingly when she "stands or sits or works or eats or lies down to sleep or goes out."

- She should study the Holy Scriptures, especially the Psalter, "a book which the sunrise ought always to find in a virgin's hands."³

A virgin's garments should be black. She should wear a veil of the same colour, and with this she should be solemnly invested by the bishop in the ceremony of her consecration to God. They were to have their arms covered as far as the fingers of each hand, and to keep their hair cut close to the head.⁴

Fasting, when not mitigated for reasons of health, was strict. It lasted a whole year. Only one meal was taken after None, and it consisted of bread and vegetables served in oil. This meal, with grace said before and after it, was often taken in common with other virgins.⁵ As for alms, the virgin provided them by sharing her meal with poor women.⁶ She was also counselled to visit the sick and to give them such assistance as they required.

We see that the religious exercises of the ascetics were done in common as far as possible. That is because the keeping of a rule is much easier under the stimulus of a common life than when one is left to one's own initiative. When the time came for the virgins of any locality to dwell under the same roof and to live the same life, their perseverance would be far more assured. Moreover, before long efforts in this direction were made, and history records the existence of communities of virgins in the last third of the third century. St. Antony, when he inaugurated the hermit life after the death of his parents about 270, placed his young

¹ Pseudo-Athanasius, *De virginitate*, 20. At the end of each Psalm they genuflected and said a prayer.

² *Peregrinatio*, 24, 39 (Geyer, *Itinera hieros.* pp. 71, 91).

³ *De virginitate*, 16, 12. Cf. St. Ambrose, *De virginibus*, iii, 18, 20.

⁴ *De virginitate*, 11 (P.G. XXVIII, 264).

⁵ *De virginitate*, 16, 12.

⁶ *Id.*, 8, 12, 13. Cf. *Peregrinatio*, 28 (Geyer, p. 80). Cf. St. Ambrose, *De virginibus*, lib. ii, iii; and St. Jerome, *Ep.* XXII, *ad Eustochium*, *Ep.* CXXX, *ad Demetriadem*.

sister in a convent (εἰς παρθενῶνα).¹ In the fourth century such communities seem to have been fairly numerous in the towns, and above all in deserts.²

But the founding of such communities and the rules laid upon the continent living in the world appeared to many to be far from sufficient means of protection. Those who desired to make sure of their salvation at all costs and to reduce their chance of being lost as far as possible felt the need of putting between the seductions of the world and themselves an impenetrable barrier. On the other hand, if they remained with their families, it was hardly possible for them to practise evangelical renunciation thoroughly and to live a truly ascetic life. Hence they planned to strip themselves of all their possessions, to leave their relations and country to withdraw into solitude, where, in entire poverty and protected from the dangers of the world, they would give up all their thoughts to God and to their eternal salvation.³

The first anchorites lived near the outskirts of towns and villages. St. Antony began his life as a hermit by dwelling for some time near Coma, his native village.⁴ But this was too near to the society of men.

Many visitors came to disturb the solitaries. Their relations frequently came to see them, and did not forget to accuse them of indifference with regard to themselves, and of allowing them, perhaps, to go short of bare necessities. In the world it would have been possible, and even easy, to win great wealth and to make a name for themselves! Lastly, the attraction of pagan pleasures, too close not to be noticed, subjected the virtue of the young hermits to formidable dangers.⁵ In the desert, far away from the habitable world, these hindrances disappeared. Hence, thither they fled.

Moreover, the monks had been anticipated by famous fore-runners. The prophet Elias, St. John the Baptist, to mention only the most noteworthy, had dwelt in the desert, and there had risen by prayer and self-discipline to the highest sanctity. The monks would try to imitate them.⁶

Lastly, in the desert there was small risk of persecution. How dreadful a trial was torture! How many Christians had apostatized in the Decian persecution of 250! Was it not

¹ St. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, 3 (P.G. XXVI, 844). St. Antony's sister grew old in virginity, and ruled a community of virgins (*Vita Antonii*, 54).

² *Lausiac History*, 1, 4 (Butler). *Peregrinatio*, 23 (Geyer, p. 69). *Vita S. Pachomii*, 28 (P.L. LXXIII, 248).

³ Cf. *Vita Antonii*, 2, 3.

⁴ *Id.*, 3.

⁵ *Vita Antonii*, 5, 6. See the famous temptation of the Saint while living as a hermit close to his native village.

⁶ *Vita Antonii*, 7; *Vita S. Onuphrii*, 4 (P.L. LXXIII, 213).

wiser, when one could do it without shirking any duty, to fly into the desert so as to avoid the risk of denying the faith?¹

Thus does the historian discern some of the reasons that drove so many Christians of the fourth century into the wilderness. Monachism was a transformation of the old asceticism, a transformation due to the circumstances of the day, and it owes nothing, as some critics tell us, to institutions unconnected with Christianity.

From the middle of the first century, indeed, there has been much discussion as to the origin of Christian monachism, and many have done their best to strip the Christian religion of the merit of having suggested this form of asceticism. Some discover the forerunners of the monks in the priests and recluses of the temples of Serapis, the famous Egyptian divinity. These solitaries are said to have been shut up in cells within the temples. A hole in the wall was the means of supplying them with food. The ideal to which they aspired was the death of the senses, the *apatheia* of the Stoics. Others think that we owe our Western monachism to the influence of Buddhist anchorites. They say that there is a striking resemblance between the asceticism of the Buddhists and that of the Christian monks. Others, again, tell us that our monks imitated the Essenians or Jewish monks who inhabited the wilderness of Engaddi, near the Red Sea, about 150 B.C. Or they may have derived their ideas from the Therapeutae² or Jewish ascetics dwelling near Alexandria or on the borders of Lake Mareotis. It has even been alleged that the ascetic ideal of the religion of Mithra, a complete expression of which is to be found in the Life of Apollonius of Tyana, written by Philostratus in the second century, was reproduced by the Christian monks. Lastly, historians think that they can show that monachism springs from Alexandrian Neoplatonism. To attain to the contemplation of things divine by means of asceticism was, as we know, the end of that philosophy. And, in fact, some Neoplatonists withdrew into a life of solitude in the neighbourhood of Alexandria, and lived as ascetics. Thus monachism arose out of Jewish or philosophical influences. It owed nothing to the Gospel. It represented an aspect of the radical transformation of Christianity effected in the fourth century. And they say that while Hellenic thought entered into and adulterated Christian dogma, foreign influences also modified the principles of

¹ St. Paul of Thebes, the first hermit, fled into the desert during the Decian persecution. St. Jerome, *Vita Pauli* (P.L. XXIII, 10). Cf. *Vita S. Charitonis* (P.G. CXV, 909). Some Christians may have fled into the wilderness to avoid military service.

² Philo mentions them in his *On the Contemplative Life*, if it be really his.

Christian asceticism. There was between monachism and the kind of religious life set forth in the Gospel a difference analogous to that which existed, as they affirm, between ecclesiastical dogma and evangelical doctrine. Monachism was an entire corruption of the asceticism of Christ's teaching.

This is not the place to refute at length these more or less ridiculous theories. They are made in Germany, and the unfair criticism of their inventors tries to set at variance the teaching of Christ and that of tradition, the Gospel and the Church, the asceticism of apostolic times and that of the fourth century.

Doubtless before the Christian monks and even before the days of Christianity there were some who lived a life of solitude and practised austerities. Is it not natural, if one desires to move God or to attain at all costs to what one believes to be man's end, to withdraw into solitude and recollection, and even to take upon oneself hard privations? In all times and in all places are to be found those who have tried to purify their souls by means of asceticism.

But whatever importance history may ascribe to the recluses of Serapis, the Buddhist ascetics, the Essenians, the Therapeutae, and the Neoplatonist solitaries, one has no right to identify them with the monks of Christendom. The external resemblances that may be discovered between their manner of life and that of Christian ascetics arise from religious instincts common to all men. There are manifestations of religious feeling, such as fasting, prayer, the life of the solitary, which make their appeal to the devout because they are themselves a part of the nature of things. A deeper knowledge of man's nature enabled many pagan philosophers to formulate rules for morality which may be compared closely with the law of Christ. St. Ambrose wrote his treatise *De officiis*, taking some of his ideas from Cicero's work of the same name. St. Nilus, Abbot of Mount Sinai in the fourth century, made use of the famous *Manual* of Epictetus in the spiritual writings intended for his monks. Yet who would venture to say that St. Ambrose's moral teaching was the same as Cicero's, and the asceticism of Nilus was that of Epictetus?

What essentially differentiates the Christian ascetics from all others is the spirit that animates them and the ideas with which they are inspired. Only read the records of the history of monachism and you will prove—that the whole of this chapter demonstrates it—that the Christian monks aimed at following the counsels of evangelical perfection to the letter, at imitating Christ and the holy men of the Old Testament, at saving their souls at all costs, at keeping themselves from the

seductions of the world and mortifying their bodies, since the passions of the body are so great an obstacle to salvation. It was not Greek dualism that led them to practise corporal austerities, nor Neoplatonist mysticism that made them pray. The most that can be said is that the vague teaching of the School of Alexandria as to *apatheia* impelled some, as we shall see, to exaggerations in asceticism and to aims which one would have to be an angel to realize.

In fact, monastic asceticism was a new manifestation, but not differing in essence from the asceticism of the Gospel. It is always a renunciation of oneself and of the things of this world to go to Christ and to God. Between the primitive asceticism and that of the monks there is the same continuity as between the doctrine of the Apostles and the dogma defined at Nice or Ephesus.

II.—THE CHIEF REPRESENTATIVES OF EASTERN MONACHISM: ANTONY AND PACHOMIUS IN EGYPT—HILARION IN PALESTINE—THE MONKS OF SYRIA AND MESOPOTAMIA—THE MONKS OF ASIA MINOR—BASIL¹

EASTERN monachism developed under two different forms: the life of the anchorite² or hermit; and the life of the coenobite or monk, strictly so called. St. Antony was the founder of the life of the anchorite. The life of the coenobite was begun by St. Pachomius, who instituted the first monastic Rule. A little later on St. Basil the Great drew up another Rule which was adopted throughout the East and supplanted the Rule of St. Pachomius.

The anchorite life began in Egypt³ with St. Paul of Thebes († about 340), and above all with St. Antony.

After living for fifteen years as a hermit close to his native

¹ Tillemont gives a detailed history of Eastern monks in his *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire Ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles*. Arnauld wrote his popular work, *Les vies des saints Pères des déserts et de quelques saintes*, Paris, 1688, for the edification of the faithful. Cf. Duchesne, *Histoire ancienne de l'Église*, II, xiv; III, ix.

² The anchorite (*ἀναχώρεω*, to withdraw into solitude) or hermit (*ἐρημὸς*, desert) was the monk who lived alone in the desert. The coenobite (*κοινὸβιον*, life in common) is he who lives in community, in a monastery. Use has given the word *monastery* a sense opposed to that of the Greek from which it is derived. *Μοναστήριον* means a place where one lives alone.

³ Starting from the Nile delta and ascending towards its source, Egypt comprised: Lower Egypt, where was Alexandria; Middle Egypt, with the city of Hierapolis, near which St. Antony was born; and Upper Egypt, with the desert of the Thebaïd, which was inhabited by so many of the monks.

village, in 285 Antony buried himself in the desert, taking up his abode in an extremely wild place called Pispir. There he lived in great austerity. His food consisted entirely of bread, the supply of which was renewed every six months. He also had to undergo very violent temptations.¹

About 305, when the Diocletian persecution was at its height, the fame of the virtues and miracles of St. Antony spread abroad. From all sides disciples flocked in to him, and soon the solitude of Pispir and the surrounding hills swarmed with monks.² They dwelt in separate cells and passed their time in chanting Psalms³ and praying and spiritual reading, and in working for their own needs and for those of others. Their fasts were strict. Perfect charity ruled amidst these solitaries.⁴ Antony gathered them together from time to time and delivered addresses to them, of which St. Athanasius has left us a summary.⁵

The vast number of visitors who came to Pispir ended by vexing St. Antony. He withdrew into the Thebaïd in Upper Egypt,⁶ to the spot where to-day one may still find the monastery of St. Antony, and a little farther on the monastery of St. Paul. There he died in 356 at the age of 105.

This great hermit, so eager for complete retirement, was nevertheless no stranger to the affairs of the Church. During the Maximinian persecution he went down to Alexandria to encourage the martyrs, hoping himself to die with them.⁷ He betook himself to Alexandria a second time in 338 to see Athanasius, his friend and former disciple, who was returning from his first exile. Antony was a great opponent of Arianism and a powerful supporter of Athanasius.⁸

In the life of Antony the whole of Egypt began to be peopled with monks. South of Alexandria, some distance in the desert, is the dreadful valley of Nitria, so named because of its nitre. There it was that St. Ammon came to settle in 325. Married in spite of himself, Ammon kept up his state of virginity in his married life. Then he withdrew with his wife to the valley of Nitria.⁹ His wife gathered virgins around her. Ammon, too, made a very large number of disciples; Palladius, who visited the solitaries of Nitria, counted five thousand of them.¹⁰

In the valley of Nitria, as at Pispir, the monks dwelt in

¹ *Vita Antonii*, 12. Cf. Tillemont, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, Paris, 1700, Vol. VII, p. 105 ff.

² *Vita Antonii*, 44.

³ At the end of every Psalm the monks prostrated themselves, and said a short prayer (Cassian [P.L. XLIX, 87, 92, 93]).

⁴ *Vita Antonii*, id.

⁵ *Id.*, 15-43.

⁷ *Id.*, 46.

⁹ Palladius, *Lausiac History*, 8.

⁶ *Id.*, 40.

⁸ *Id.*, 68 ff.

¹⁰ *Id.*, 7.

separate cells. There was no common rule; each monk ordered his doings as he thought best. On Saturday and Sunday, all the monks met in church. This was built in the middle of the valley, for the sake of the Eucharist and of hearing the word of God.¹ Very impressive must have been the sight of all the cells in tiers upon the sides of the valley and the sound of the chanting of Psalms proceeding from them morning and night. One might think that one had been granted a vision of paradise, says Palladius.² Athanasius speaks, too, of the enthusiasm of those who visited the hills of Pispir, when they saw the long lines of cells "full of heavenly choirs singing the divine praises. The prophet's cry of astonishment (Num. xxiv, 5, 6) broke from their lips: *How beautiful are thy tabernacles, O Jacob, and thy tents, O Israel! As woody valleys: as watered gardens near the rivers: as tabernacles which the Lord hath pitched: as cedars by the waterside.*"³

In ascending the valley of Nitria, one reaches a still more fearful desert, the desert of the Cells. There lived the famous Macarius of Alexandria († 394), who desired to outdo everyone in mortification.⁴ The writer Evagrius of Pontus settled there in 352, and lived there until the day of his death in 399.⁵ For among the solitaries men of letters were to be found. Many of them had the works of Clement of Alexandria and of Origen.⁶

Beyond the Cells again stretched the great wilderness of Scete, a waste of sand, the remotest of the deserts. Macarius of Egypt established himself there, and there he lived for sixty years with a few disciples. He was a priest, and had "the grace of healing and prophecy." Such prodigies and marvels were recounted of him that Palladius shrinks from telling them for fear of not being believed.⁷

The life of the monks was, indeed, quite an extraordinary one, and that much more on account of its austerities than because of its marvels. There was much talk in the deserts of many astounding ascetics who did penance by eating next to nothing and by not sleeping.

One of them, Dorotheus by name, during the day beneath the blazing sun carried stones to build cells for monks who had none. In the night he plaited palm-leaves to earn food. "God is my witness," says Palladius, who lived near him,

¹ *Lausiatic History*, 7. The withdrawal of the monks from Communion was censured (*Lausiatic History*, 25-27). Near the solitaries there was always a church with priests to which they had to go on Saturdays and Sundays. Cases of entire isolation, such as that of St. Antony in his first years at Pispir, are rare and not to be imitated.

² *Id.*

³ *Vita Antonii*, 44. Cf. Chrysostom, *In Matt. Hom.* VIII, 4.

⁴ *Lausiatic History*, 18.

⁵ *Id.*, 38.

⁶ *Id.*, II, 60.

⁷ *Id.*, 17.

"I never knew him rest his legs or sleep on a rush mat or bed. . . . From his youth up he lived thus, never sleeping intentionally, unless it were that while he was busy or eating he came to close his eyes when overcome with sleep."¹ Thus he lived for sixty years.

Macarius of Alexandria ate nothing cooked with fire for seven years, and to overcome sleepiness stayed outside his cell for twenty days, burnt with the heat by day and benumbed with the cold by night. To punish himself for an act of impatience, for six months he exposed himself close to the marshes of Scete to the bites of mosquitoes, which in that district are as bad as wasps. Soon his body was covered with wounds. One year he stood upright without bending his knees during the whole of Lent, and his food consisted of a few cabbage-leaves.²

Others were famous for their fearfully rigorous seclusion. A recluse, named Alexandria, shut herself up in a tomb and lived in it for ten years. Food was conveyed to her through a small opening left for the purpose.³

On a mountain near Lycopolis in the Thebaïd lived an ascetic, John, who spent more than thirty years walled up in a grotto of three chambers. He took in his food through a small window. He enjoyed the gift of prophecy. Palladius relates how he foretold to Theodosius his victories over Maximus and Eugenius. He also predicted the episcopate of Palladius to himself.⁴

While the hermit life was growing at Pispir, in the valley of Nitria and in many other parts of Lower⁵ and Middle Egypt another form of monastic life was founded in the Thebaïd : coenobitism.

The initiator of the coenobitic life, Pachomius, was born of a pagan family. No sooner had he been converted and baptized than he vowed himself to asceticism, and conceived the idea, after having a vision, of living his life in common with other ascetics. Such was the origin of the first Pachomian monastery, founded about 320 at Tabennesi in the Thebaïd. His sister set up monasteries for women, which she governed.⁶

Unlike the anchorites who lived in their cells without a common rule or superior, the monks of Pachomius were

¹ *Lausiac History*, 2 (A. Lucot, p. 41). ² *Id.*, 18.

³ *Id.*, 5.

⁴ *Id.*, 35.

⁵ Palladius, who stayed in Egypt from 388 to 399, counted two thousand monks near Alexandria alone.

⁶ *Acta Sanctorum*, 14 May, p. 296 ff., Paris, 1866. *Vita S. Pachonii*, 2, 11, 28 (P.L. LXXIII, 232 ff.). *Lausiac History*, 32. On Pachomius, see Ladeuze, *Études sur le cénobitisme Pachômien pendant le IV^e siècle et la première moitié du V^e*, 1898.

bound by a common rule of life and obeyed a single head. They devoted themselves to manual work and to the study of Holy Scripture.

Their fasts, prescribed by the Rule, were not excessive, as were those of the hermits. The prayers to which they were bound were few in number, so that all might be able "to say the regular office without being distressed. As for the perfect, they need no rule; for living alone in their cells, they are well known to devote the whole of their lives to the contemplation of God."¹

This Rule, which will be set forth later on, is full of wisdom and discretion. It was held to have been given to Pachomius as it stood by an angel. Pachomius, indeed, had many visions and other extraordinary gifts which brought him great prestige.² Moreover, Pachomian coenobitism grew rapidly. Monks flocked in large numbers to the monastery of Tabennesi. Other monasteries soon arose and made, along with the mother-house with which they were connected, what was afterwards called a religious order. At one time Pachomius presided over eight monasteries of which he was the abbot.³

After the death of Pachomius in 348 various groups of coenobitic monasteries grew up. One of the most famous was that of the White House at Atri-pe, near Panopolis, in the Thebaïd. The head of this monastery and its offshoots was the celebrated St. Schnoudi (339-451). A man of strict discipline, he governed his numerous monks with severity and, when he deemed it advantageous for the keeping of the Rule, with strokes of the whip and blows of the stick. Soon all the country round fell under his influence, much to the annoyance of the evil-doers who dwelt in it.

Egypt was not the only district in the East which possessed monks. Hilarion, a disciple of St. Antony, inaugurated the hermit life in Palestine about 306. He established himself to the south of Gaza and soon had thousands of followers.⁴ It is in Palestine that we meet with the arrangement of hermitages or *lauras*. The *lauras* (λαύραι)⁵ were colonies of hermits gathered into villages, and formed of cells found in a defined area. Life in a *laura* was in a way intermediate between that of solitaries totally independent of one another

¹ *Lausiack History*, 32 (A. Lucot, p. 219).

² *Id.*, 32. *Acta Sanctorum*, 14 May, p. 313.

³ *Acta Sanctorum*, 14 May, pp. 310, 316. The word *abbot* comes from the Syriac *abba*, meaning father (Mark xiv, 36; Rom. viii, 18; Gal. v, 5). For many centuries this name was given to all monks of eminence. It more especially signified the head of a monastery or group of houses.

⁴ St. Jerome, *Vita S. Hilarionis*, 3, 14 (P.L. XXIII, 30, 34).

⁵ Cf. Genier, *Vie de S. Euthyme le Grand* (377-473), p. 6 ff.

and that of coenobites living in community. Monks in lauras, while living apart in their cells, were nevertheless gathered round their heads. In the neighbourhood of Jerusalem there were several famous lauras.

Hilarion's contemporary, Epiphanius of Eleutheropolis, afterwards Bishop of Salamis († 403), who was also formerly an Egyptian hermit, introduced Pachomian anchoritism into Palestine.

Mount Sinai and other biblical sites attracted monks, who established themselves there in large numbers. St. Nilus, a prolific ascetical writer, lived as a hermit on Mount Sinai. Jerusalem possessed a singular attraction. Around its walls were to be seen quantities of anchorites who were visited by the pilgrim Etheria.¹ On the Mount of Olives the priest Rufinus of Aquileia, the friend and afterwards the opponent of St. Jerome, lived many a year in solitude. From 386 to 420 Jerome ruled a monastery of monks at Bethlehem, where his spiritual daughters Paula and Eustochium also directed a convent of women. For the renown of the Eastern monks attracted a vast number of Western pilgrims who came, despite the immense difficulties in the way of travelling across the deserts,² to be edified by the most famous ascetics, and sometimes to settle for a season near their cells. Roman matrons, such as the two Melanias,³ did not hesitate to strip themselves of their wealth to come and learn from the solitaries of the East to set their minds entirely on the things of heaven.

Palestinian monachism, too, produced its wonders in asceticism. At Jerusalem Palladius met the monk Adulius, who "practised asceticism beyond the powers of humanity. . . . For on account of his excessive abstinence and vigils he was suspected of being a ghost. During Lent, indeed, he ate once in five days, and at all other times once every other day. . . . From the evening (until the monks met to pray), on the Mount of Olives, on the hill-top where the Ascension of Jesus took place, he remained standing singing and praying all the time. And whether it snowed or rained, there he stood and never moved."⁴

In northern Syria and in Mesopotamia asceticism was even more startling. Theodoret of Cyr⁵ has given us a history of the monks round Antioch, Beroea, Chalcis, and Edessa. Among them were to be found some who had no food-

¹ The *Peregrinatio* often mentions monks living in Palestine.

² Cf. Dom Besse, *Les moines d'Orient antérieurs au Concile de Chalcedoine*, pp. 455-471.

³ Cf. Georges Goyau, *Sainte Melanie*, Paris, 1908.

⁴ *Lausiac History*, 43 (A. Lucot, pp. 295-297).

⁵ *Historia religiosa* (P.G. LXXXII, 1283-1496).

supplies. They fed upon green herbs and what the ground naturally produced.

St. James of Nisibis,¹ before he became the bishop of the village where he was born, lived as a hermit. He dwelt on the highest mountain peaks deep in the woods in summer. In the winter he betook himself to a cave, a poor shelter from the cold. He ate the fruit of wild trees and the herbs that grew in the fields, and had no cooked food. He wore no woollen clothes, but a rough coat of goat's-hair. Thus he starved his body while giving his soul an abundance of spiritual food. And he distinguished himself by his heroic conduct when the Persians under Sapor II laid siege to Nisibis in 338 and 350. At the Council of Nice he appeared as an energetic defender of orthodoxy. He died in 361.

Before settling at Bethlehem St. Jerome lived for many years in the solitude of Chalcis "in the scorching heat of the sun," and where "to partake of cooked food was regarded as an exhibition of intemperance."²

Even St. John Chrysostom, whose vocation to the active life, the *βίος πρακτικός*, is so evident, partook in his youth of the general enthusiasm for the contemplative life, the *βίος θεωρητικός*. Nevertheless, he deferred the execution of his plan to live as a hermit until his mother's death, as she could not resign herself to her son's leaving his father's roof.³ John spent six years in solitude in the neighbourhood of Antioch, leading the life of monk and hermit in turns, abandoning himself to indiscreet austerities that affected his health and compelled him to return home.⁴ In his withdrawal to the desert he wrote several works dealing with the monastic life.⁵

It was in northern Syria that asceticism made its appearance in a form that was altogether astounding: that of the stylites (*στυλῖος*, *column*) or monks who lived upon pillars.

The most celebrated stylite was St. Simeon, born at Antioch, who died about 459. Simeon lived as an ascetic near his native town. He passed the whole of Lent almost without drinking or eating, standing for weeks at a time. He

¹ *Historia religiosa*, I (P.G. LXXXII, 1293). Note St. Aphraates or Afrahat, "the Persian Sage," abbot of a Persian monastery, then bishop, and St. Ephraem, deacon of Edessa, who lived near that town as an anchorite. They left ascetical writings in Syriac.

² St. Jerome, *Ep.* XXII, *ad Eustochium*, 7.

³ See an account of this touching and famous episode in the treatise *On the Priesthood*, I, 4-6.

⁴ Palladius, *Dial. de vita S. Joan. Chrys.* 5 (P.G. XLVII, 18).

⁵ The two *Exhortations to Theodore*, the future Bishop of Mopsuestia, who had given up the monastic life. The two books *On Compunction*. The three books *Against the Opponents of Monasticism*, in which the greatness and the sanctity of the monastic life are brought out. The work *King and Monk Compared*. *Consolation at Stagira*, and *On Virginity*. All these are to be found in the *Patrologia Graeca*, XLVII.

had himself fastened to the rock by an iron chain. This rigour brought upon him the interference of the ecclesiastical authorities, who compelled Simeon to forgo his chain. Then it was that he conceived the idea of billeting himself on a pillar, first ten feet high, and afterwards thirty feet. He wrought a real mission by his miracles and by the prestige he gained from his holy austerity. He converted great numbers of Syrians, Persians, Armenians, and people of various districts who came to gaze at him on his pillar.¹ His renown spread as far as Gaul, where St. Geneviève spoke of him.

Simeon had imitators. Daniel the Stylite, who lived near Constantinople at the close of the fifth century, was one of the best known.

The monks of Syria and Mesopotamia for a long time lived apart from one another. Each lived in his own way without rule or superior. This was what permitted the astounding austerities above related. This unchecked freedom of the monks had other drawbacks, particularly that of removing them from the control of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Moreover, very often wandering monks, and even those who had a fixed abode, caused real difficulties for their ecclesiastical superiors.²

In Asia Minor, under the influence of St. Basil, Eastern monachism completed its development and took its final shape.

Monastic life was started in Asia Minor by Eustathius, who became Bishop of Sebaste.³ This man's asceticism was apparently of dubious quality. It was thought to be tainted with Encratism. However that may be, it was with Eustathius that Basil went through his apprenticeship for the monastic life.

But before devoting himself to asceticism Basil traversed Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia during 357 and 358. He watched the monks' way of life, he wondered at "their abstinence in eating, their courage in toil, their constancy in nightly prayer, the high and unconquerable spirit that made them despise hunger, thirst, and cold, as if they were unconnected with their bodies, true wayfarers in the world, and already citizens of heaven."⁴

On returning to Asia Minor, Basil withdrew into a desert of Pontus near Neocaesarea, and there lived as a monk until he was raised to the episcopate in 370. His only clothes were

¹ Theodoret, *Hist. Reliq.* 26.

² See Caesari's *Colloq.* xviii, 7, 9, and St. Jerome, *Ep.* XXII, 34, for the Sarabaites and other sorts of monks who needed more or less episcopal surveillance.

³ Tillemont, *Hist. Eccl.* IX, p. 79, Paris, 1703.

⁴ St. Basil, *Ep.* CCXXIII, 2. Cf. P. Allard, *Saint Basile*, p. 27.

one garment and one cloak, his only bed a board or a rug laid upon the ground, his food bread and salt and a few herbs, and his drink pure water from the mountain.¹ He lived in community with a few ascetics whom he gathered round him.² The Rule that he followed³ is the first outline of the Rules he drew up later on.

It was during this time of retreat that Basil took advantage of his own experience and of those who were his forerunners to write his first draft of rules, *Regulae fusius tractatae*. His other draft, *Regulae brevius tractatae*, belongs to the time of his episcopate and was undoubtedly drawn up at Caesarea. The Rule of St. Basil takes the form of questions and answers unmethodically gathered together. It clearly favours Pachomian coenobitism, which is made still more strict than before. Nor was it long before it was followed in all the monasteries of the East. Even to-day it is the Rule of all the Greco-Slavonic religious houses.

III.—EASTERN MONASTICISM—THE RULES OF ST. PACHOMIUS AND ST. BASIL⁴

1. *The Admission and Probation of Novices.*

A TIME of probation had to precede a man's profession as a monk.

The probation of those who wished to live as anchorites in the isolation of the desert was simple enough. They went to some well-known recluse in whom they had confidence. They settled near him and were inspired by his counsels and did their best to follow them. Sooner or later if the novice adapted himself to his new way of life he learned to fly with his own wings. He withdrew to a distance, built himself a cell in a lonely place, and lived as a hermit in his own way.⁵ St. Antony had distinguished followers who were thus trained by him for a hermit's life, among whom was St. Athanasius.

Not nearly as easy were the admission and probation of novices in a Pachomian or Basilian monastery. Before finally enrolling a religious in a community it is absolutely necessary to make sure not only of his steadfastness and disinterestedness in taking such a step, but still more of his fitness for living in community. If he was likely to be a

¹ St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio* XLIII, 61.

² St. Basil, *Ep.* CCXXIII, 3.

³ It is described by St. Basil in a letter to St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Ep.* II.

⁴ In order to avoid tedious repetition, I shall set forth the two Rules simultaneously, contrasting their differences.

⁵ Cf. *Lausiac History*, 2, 17, etc. *Vita Sancti Pachomii*, 6, 7.

source of disturbance and disorder, and even of wrecking the community, it would be better to lock the gates against him.¹

When a postulant presented himself at a Pachomian monastery he was left "for a few days outside the door."² The famous Macarius of Alexandria, disguised as a working man to avoid recognition, one day came to Tabennesi and asked to join the renowned community. He desired to give the religious, some of whom thought they were very advanced in asceticism, a lesson. The superior Pachomius, thinking he had to do with an ordinary postulant, waited seven days before opening the doors of his house for him.³

During these days of waiting the postulant begged the religious who were going in and out of the monastery to admit him. He flung himself at their feet and implored them to look favourably upon his request. Sometimes he was rudely rebuffed. They wanted to test the sincerity of his desire for the monastic life, and to train him in humility and patience.⁴

The Rule of St. Basil was more moderate and prescribed nothing like this. If the postulant persevered in his resolution, on the order of the abbot the porters brought him into the house for outsiders. He was taught the Lord's Prayer, as many Psalms as possible, and certain other portions of Holy Scripture. In the meantime they ascertained particulars as to his birth, as to whether he was a freeman or a slave, as to his conduct while in the world, and as to his willingness to quit his family and possessions.⁵

The Rule of St. Basil treats at length of testing the inward dispositions of the postulant.⁶ The future of a monastery depends, indeed, on its getting fresh members, and St. Basil knows well how to plan his houses to last. To secure an impartial test, the Rule advises the refusal of gifts that may be offered by the relations of the postulant.⁷ The poor are to be taken in the same way as the rich.⁸ Unemancipated slaves are not to be received; they must be sent back to their masters, as St. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon.⁹

¹ Cf. St. Basil, *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 10 (P.G. XXXI, 944). Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, iv, 3 (P.L. XLIX, 155).

² *Manebit paucis diebus foris ante januam (Regula Pachomii, 49 [P.L. XXIII, 70])*.

³ *Lausiaca History*, 18.

⁴ Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, iv, 30: (*Pynuphius*) *coenobium Tabennensietarum expetiit . . . ubi diutissime pro foribus perseverans, cunctorum fratrum genibus provolutus, ut susciperetur summis precibus ambivit. Cumque nullo despectu tandem fuisset admissus. . .*

⁵ *Regula Pachomii*, 49.

Regulae fusius tractatae, 10.

⁷ *Regulae brevius tractatae*, 304.

⁸ *Id.*, 89.

⁹ *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 11.

Married men are not to be admitted unless their wives consent, and such consent is to be given in the presence of witnesses.¹ St. Basil, like St. Pachomius, admitted children among those who were novices.²

The postulant became acquainted with the Rule of the monastery, and if he said he was ready to follow it, on a favourable vote of the religious³ he was led to the assembly of the brethren and clothed with the monastic habit.⁴ Then his real religious probation began.

In the Basilian monasteries this probation consisted in training the novice in humility and in utter indifference in accepting the lowliest work. He had to accept it without the least hesitation.⁵ The Rule of St. Basil prescribes obedience thus: an order agreeable to the law of God, when given by a superior, must be carried out at the cost of life itself. If an order were contrary to the law of God, even if it were given by an angel or an Apostle, it must not be obeyed, even if our resistance thereto would result in death.⁶

Cassian informs us that the probation of a novice in a Pachomian monastery was extremely hard. It was intended to make him attain the greatest height of perfection.⁷

The monk who had to train the novice in the religious life began by trying to destroy self-will in the subject. For this end he always of set purpose bade him do what he knew to be against the grain.⁸ For this renunciation of one's own will was considered by the heads of monasteries to be the foundation-stone of the coenobitic life,⁹ and the virtue to be preferred to all others. Experience has proved that a religious who clings to his own way of thinking is unable to conquer his carnal passions, or bad temper, or depression. He cannot keep in peace and concord with his brethren, and he ends by leaving the monastery.¹⁰

¹ *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 12.

² *Id.*, 15; *Regula Pachomii*, 116. They only took a vow of chastity at a given age and of their own free choice. St. Basil, *Ep.* CXLIX, *ad Amphilochium*, 18.

³ *Lausiac History*, 18; *Regulae brevius tractatae*, 112.

⁴ *Regula Pachomii*, 49. On the dress of the Eastern monks, see Dom Besse, *Les moines d'Orient antérieurs au Concile de Chalcédoine*, p. 299 n.

⁵ *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 10.

⁶ *Regulae brevius tractatae*, 303. Cf. *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 41, 47, 48.

⁷ *Junior introductus ascendere . . . etiam culmina perfectionis summa praevaleat* (*De Coenobiorum Institutis*, iv, 8).

⁸ Cassian, *id.*: *Haec illi semper imperare de industria procurabit quae senserit animo ejus esse contraria.*

⁹ *Finis quidem cenobitae est omnes suas mortificare et crucifigere voluntates* (Cassian, *Collatio*, xix, 8. Cf. St. Jerome, *Ep.* XXII, *ad Eustochium*, 35).

¹⁰ Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, vi, 8.

There were two chief means used for breaking the will of the novices; entire confidence and open-heartedness with regard to their superior, even to the point of revealing to him their most secret thoughts,¹ and a most perfect and strict obedience.

In the matter of obedience novices were bound to go to the utmost limit. They had to obey with the strictest promptitude. As soon as the signal for any exercise was given, everyone immediately left his cell and went with such haste to the place assigned that those who were working as copyists left off in the middle of any letter they were writing.²

Further, they required an obedience that was absolute and blind. A superior's orders were to be carried out as if they came from God Himself. In their execution neither discussion nor hesitation was tolerated. Obedience there must be, at any rate an endeavour to obey, even if the performance of a command seemed impossible.³

Delightful examples of obedience in the above sense are related of the monasteries of the East.

John of Lycopolis lived in his youth in monastic communities before becoming an anchorite on Mount Lyco.⁴ The old monk who was training him desired to test his obedience. He planted a dry and withered stick in the ground and ordered the young man to water it twice a day as if it were likely to take root. John went a long way to fetch the water and watered the stick for a whole year through all weathers until the old man told him to stop.⁵

Another time John was ordered to remove a great mass of rock which several men could not have stirred. He tried to do this, and with such energy that his limbs were covered with perspiration and the rock ran with it.⁶ Obedience was,

¹ Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, iv, 7-9. *Collatio*, ii, 10. St. Basil also regards this practice, a kind of spiritual direction, as necessary for the moral progress of the religious (*Regulae tuius tractatae*, 26).

² *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, iv, 12: *Cum sonitum pulsantis ostium ac diversorum cellulas percutientis audierint, ad orationem eos scilicet seu ad opus aliquod invitantis, certatim e cubilibus suis unusquisque prorumpit, ita ut is qui opus scriptoris exercet, quam repertus fuerit inchoasse litteram finire non audeat, sed in eodem puncto quo ad aures ejus sonitus pulsantis advenit, summa velocitate prosiliens, ne tantum quidem morae interponat quantum coepli apicis consummet effigiem, sed imperfectas litterae lineas derelinquens non tam operis compendia lucrare sectetur quam obediendae virtutem exsequi toto studio atque aemulatione festinet.* Cf. *Vitae Patrum*, V, xiv, 5 (P.L. LXXIII, 938).

³ *Id.*, iv, 10: *Universa complere quaecumque faciunt ab eo (praeposito) praeepta, tanquam si a Deo sint coelitus data, sine ulla discussione festinant; ut nonnunquam etiam impossibilia sibi imperata ea fide ac devotione suscipiant, ut tota virtute ac sine ulla cordis haesitatione perficere ea aut consummare nitantur.*

⁴ *Lousiac History*, 32.

⁵ *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, iv, 24. Cf. *Vitae Patrum*, V, xiv, 3.

⁶ *Id.*, iv, 26.

indeed, the virtue esteemed beyond all others, and the price paid for it could not be too high.¹

Amidst edifying instances are to be found some in which the proof of obedience outstripped the limits of discretion and even of prudence.² St. Basil in his moderation would never have approved of some of the notions ascribed to the old monks on the matter of obedience.³

Pachomian novices also had to devote themselves to manual work and to study. All were bound to learn to read if they were uneducated. They had to learn by heart a large portion of Holy Scripture, especially of the Psalter.

When his probation was over the novice became a real monk. After his "profession," if he left the monastery to go back into the world he was regarded as a sort of perjurer. His position resembled that of a modern religious who goes back to secular life without obtaining a dispensation from his vows.

2. The Exercises of the Monastic Life—The Rule.

To understand the inner life of a Pachomian monastery, one must get to know its organization.

The abbot governed a confederation of monasteries under his jurisdiction. St. Pachomius himself directed eight monasteries.⁴

Every monastery had a superior called *Father* or *Head of the monastery* (*pater, princeps monasterii*), to whom all were subject. The superior had one or more substitutes, deputies (*secundi*), who helped him and took his place when he was away.⁵

The monastery itself was divided into several houses or families (*domus, familiae*), kinds of phalansteries of thirty or forty persons according to its importance. Three or four houses linked together made what was called a tribe.⁶ Each house contained about forty religious who lived by threes in their cells.⁷

¹ *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, iv, 12: *Quam (obedientiam) non solum operi manuum, seu lectioni, vel silentio et quieti cellae, verum etiam cunctis virtutibus ita praeferunt ut huic judicent omnia postponenda et universa dispendia subire contenti sint, dummodo hoc bonum in nullo violasse videantur.*

² *Cf. id.*, iv, 27; *Vitae Patrum*, V, xiv, 18.

³ *Vitae Patrum*, *ibid.*, 12: *Dicebant senes: quia quis habet in aliquo fidem, et tradit se ei ad subjectionem, non debet attendere mandatis Dei, sed patri suo spirituali omnem voluntatem suam committere; quia illi per omnia obediens non incurrat peccatum apud Deum.*

⁴ *Acta Sanctorum*, 14 May, pp. 310, 316.

⁵ *Regula Pachomii*, 24, 25, etc.; Orcisius, *De institutione monachorum* (P.G. XL, 895 ff.).

⁶ *Regula Pachomii*, 16.

⁷ *Lausiaca History*, 32.

The families or houses were distinguished from one another by their different occupations. One had charge of the cooking, another of the infirmary, another of the entrance and of outside visitors, others of the cultivation of the land and of crafts required for the life of the monastery.¹

At the head of each house was a rector (*praepositus domus*), who ruled his family of monks under the superior of the monastery. He transmitted the orders of the latter to the religious, and taught them the customs of the monastic life. He was to make no innovations, but to follow the rules of the monastery.² He was chosen from among the elder ones, for, according to the maxims of the Egyptian monks, apprenticeship in commanding is learnt by long years of obedience.³

Besides the special occupations of each house, the common services of the monastery had to be assured. This was done by the heads of houses with their religious, who undertook it by turns for a week at a time, and these were called hebdomadaries (*hebdomadarii*).

Very different was the Basilian idea of a monastery. Instead of this government in two stages by a superior and the heads of houses, St. Basil has only one superior (*προεστώς*), who is himself the centre of all authority, and who exercises it immediately over all the members of the community. A deputy replaces him when he is away. The Pachomian monastery retained something of the organization of the Egyptian hermitages, where the monks lived apart in their cells under a modified dependence upon their head. St. Basil did away with the last vestiges of the eremitical life, which he esteemed but little. He likes to enumerate its disadvantages, the chief of which is the lack of any superior.⁴ When living in the desert he had noted the vagabond hermits, impatient of all authority, who could not settle down anywhere, to their own great loss and to the great injury of society. Moreover, he intended his monks to live strictly in community and the authority of their superior to be very powerful. And that the superior might devote all his care and activity to the government of his house, he was forbidden to rule over several monasteries according to the system of Pachomius.

The Basilian monastery included but a relatively small number of monks. Thus it was all the more easily ruled, and

¹ *Lausiac History*, 32; *Acta Sanctorum*, 14 May, pp. 310, 316.

² Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, ii, 3: *Nullus congregationi fratrum praefuturus eligitur, priusquam idem, qui praeficiendus est, quid obtemperaturis oporteat imperari obediendo didicerit. Cf. Regula Pachomii*, 159.

³ *Regulae Iusius tractatae*, 45.

⁴ *Id.*, 7. As to the purpose of St. Basil in the organization of monasteries, see St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio XLIII*, 62.

the superior could gather the whole of his community together to attend the offices at which he presided. The Pachomian system, on the contrary, enabled a very large number of monks to be admitted to the same monastery. According to Palladius, there were thirteen hundred in the convent of Tabennesi.¹ One consequence was that the religious could not fulfil all their offices together. Hence arose difficulties and disorders which the severity of the rules could not prevent.

Such different conceptions of the monastery lead one to anticipate notable dissimilarities between the two Rules.

The religious exercises of the Pachomian monks comprised the Office, spiritual discourses, and partaking of the Eucharist.

The regular Office (κανών)² consisted, as far as one can ascertain, in saying twelve prayers (ποιεῖν εἰχὺς δώδεκα) in common daily. We do not know if they were distributed according to the hours of the day at Tierce and Sext. At None three prayers were said. Twelve other prayers were recited at the time of lighting the lamps; that is to say, in the evening, probably in two shifts: six at Vespers, and six at bedtime.³ On vigils twelve more prayers were said about midnight. Lastly, a Psalm was sung before each meal (ψαλμόν).⁴

Most of the prayers were said in full assembly by the whole community. Some were recited in each house, and especially the prayers prescribed by the Rule at dawn (*orationes matutinae*).⁵

Religious who were lawfully hindered from assisting at these prayers of the Rule, or who were travelling, had to recite them privately at the proper time.⁶

St. Basil adopted the traditional hours of prayer for his monasteries: dawn, Tierce, Sext, None, nightfall, bedtime, and the vigil at midnight. All the religious assisted at the Hours in the same place. In the daytime they broke off work to come to prayers at the proper time. Those who were

¹ *Lausiack History*, 32. This became the ruin of the Pachomian monasteries. St. Pachomius was under the impression in his own lifetime that his monks were not persevering in their primitive fervour. Cf. *Vita S. Pachomii*, 45: (*Pachomius*) *obsecrabat Dominum, quatenus declararet statum monachorum qui futurus esset, vel quid post ejus obitum in tanta congregatione contingeret. . . . Cumque precaretur . . . visionem cernit quae eum . . . plenius edoceret. Nam monasteria sua vehementius dilatando, nonnullosque pie victuros et continenter agnovit, neglecturos etiam plurimos didicit, suamque salutem penitus esse perdituros.*

² *Lausiack History*, 32.

³ *Id.*; *Regula Pachomii*, 24, 126, 186.

⁴ *Id.*, 32.

⁵ *Regula Pachomii*, 155.

⁶ *Id.*, 142.

lawfully hindered prayed by themselves. The hours were kept by the recitation of prayers (*προσευχαί*) and the chanting of Psalms (*ψαλμοὶ*), prayers, and chants, changed as often as possible to avoid tedium and to stimulate attention.¹

In the Pachomian monasteries the head of the house twice or thrice a week gave the religious spiritual talks, a kind of catechesis on the monastic life.² The superior of the monastery spoke to all the monks gathered together as often as he thought fit.³ After the talks, each monk withdrew to his cell to meditate on what he had heard. The head of each house questioned his religious as to what he remembered. Moreover, meditation on the teaching given or on certain passages of Holy Scripture, whether in going to and from place to place, or at work, or in the solitude of the cell, is very frequently recommended by the Pachomian Rule.⁴

On Saturdays and Sundays all met in church to assist at the eucharistic mysteries and to receive Holy Communion.⁵

The Rule of St. Basil provides also for exhortations and the preaching of the Gospel to the religious.⁶ It recommends, too, the practice of confession.⁷ Monks who had committed faults were to acknowledge them to the brethren who were priests to obtain forgiveness of them. This private administration of the sacrament of Penance, apart from all outward solemnity, was not long in becoming general in the monasteries of the East.

Manual work and study were prescribed by the Pachomian Rule. St. Jerome is right in saying that in the Egyptian monasteries the monk is bound to work, not only to supply his needs, but to assure his salvation.⁸

Besides the various crafts required by the monastery, the commonest employment to which almost everyone devoted himself was the making of mats and baskets.⁹ Every morning the superior gave his orders for the day to the hebdomadaries, and these with the heads of the various houses superintended the carrying out of the work.¹⁰ The product of the monks' labour was sold at Alexandria, whence the provisions required for the monastery were brought home.¹¹

¹ *Regulae Iusius tractatae*, 37.

² *Regula Pachomii*, 20-22, 156.

³ *Acta Sanctorum*, 14 May, p. 310 ff.

⁴ *Regula Pachomii*, 2, 28, 36, 37, 59, 60, 122.

⁵ *Lausiaca History*, 32.

⁶ *Regulae brevius tractatae*, 184, 185.

⁷ *Id.*, 288.

⁸ *Ep. CXXV. ad Rusticum monachum*, No. 11: *Aegyptiorum monasteria hunc morem tenent, ut nullum absque operis labore suscipiant, non tam propter victus necessitatem quam propter animae salutem.*

⁹ *Lausiaca History*, 32; *Regula Pachomii*, 5.

¹⁰ *Regula Pachomii*, 12, 25-27.

¹¹ *Lausiaca History*, 32.

Reading was recommended to the religious. At the beginning of every week the heads of houses received the books required by their subjects, and handed them back on the Saturday. Among the monks were to be found great numbers of scribes and caligraphers.¹

St. Basil lays it down that his religious should give a preference to the study of Holy Scripture. To enable them to understand it more readily, he gives the rules of interpretation to be followed.² Most of the articles of the *Little Rules* comprise explanations for the use of the monks of the rather difficult passages of the Bible, and make a kind of sacred hermeneutics.

Manual work is prescribed as strictly by St. Basil as by St. Pachomius. He insists upon its necessity, and vehemently reproaches those religious who look down upon manual work on the ground that they are praying or chanting Psalms. We must work to obey God's command and to help the brethren in their need as well as the poor. Among the various kinds of work, St. Basil shows his preference for agriculture. The products of the monks' work were exchanged for the various products of the work of other monasteries.³

The monastic discipline of the Pachomian Rule ordered fasting on every Wednesday and Friday. On fast-days there was only one meal after None; that is to say, after three o'clock in the afternoon. In Lent all the days were fast-days. There was no fasting in Paschal-time. When there was no fast, two meals were allowed, one at midday and one in the evening. The Rule left the religious free to lay upon himself harder privations. There were monks, particularly in Lent, who in their desire to copy the anchorites ate only every other day, and others ate only once in five days.⁴

St. Basil did not allow his monks to practise such extraordinary mortifications. The authorization of a superior was required for the undertaking of more rigorous vigils and fasts than those prescribed by the Rule. For undue austerities are often suggested by vainglory.⁵ The liberty allowed in this matter in the Pachomian monasteries gave rise to abuses, and led, in fact, to temptations of vanity.⁶

The various classes of those who fasted and the large numbers of the monks compelled the Pachomian monasteries to have several relays of meals, because all ate in the same refectory. The first course was at midday, and there were others at one o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock, and until

¹ *Id.*; *Regula Pachonii*, 25.

² *Cf. Regulae brevius tractatae*, 251, 252, 279, etc.

³ *Regulae fusiùs tractatae*, 37-39, 42.

⁴ *Lausiaca History*, 18, 32.

⁵ *Regulae brevius tractatae*, 138.

⁶ *Lausiaca History*, 18.

late on in the evening. Each monk took his food at the hour fixed for his house, and according to the fast to which he bound himself.¹

St. Basil would never have tolerated a usage so fruitful of disorder. All his religious had to eat at the same time, and if one of them was late through his own fault, he had to go without his meal.²

Meat and wine were forbidden, except to the sick and the aged.³ Outside of meal-times nothing was to be eaten, not even a piece of fallen fruit found in the garden.⁴

The heads of houses had to teach their religious how to behave at table. The monks ate with their cowls or hoods over their heads, so as not to see their neighbours eating, and that each might be able to conceal his mortifications from the rest.⁵ Also one was forbidden to look at one's neighbour while he was praying or working.⁶

Silence at table was most strictly kept. To talk or laugh at meal-time was to incur an open rebuke there and then and liability to a public penance.⁷ Only the heads of houses were allowed to ask by signs for what they wanted. Silence was so perfectly kept in the refectory that, despite the large numbers of monks who were taking their meal, not a sound was to be heard, says Cassian.⁸ There was no reading in the refectory in Pachomian monasteries.

The religious had also to refrain from talking in going from the refectory to their cells, during the Office and while at work, and lastly at night during bedtime.⁹ St. Basil, too, prescribes strict silence during these times, and explains its educational and sanctifying value to the novices.¹⁰

In the matter of sleep, the Pachomian Rule orders monks not to sleep at full length lying down, but reclining on seats with a sloping back, covered with mats. They were to sleep fully clothed, and cells were to remain open at night.¹¹

Visitors were not allowed to mix with a Pachomian community, nor to have their meals in the refectory, for fear that they might be scandalized by the shortcomings of the novices or the children.¹² Visiting clergy and monks who sought hospitality were received with honour by the porters, who

¹ *Lausiaca History*, 32.

² *Regulae brevius tractatae*, 136.

³ *Lausiaca History*, 32; *Regula Pachomii*, 45, 54.

⁴ *Regula Pachomii*, 35, 67-69; Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, iv, 18; v, 20.

⁵ *Lausiaca History*, 32. Cassian, *id.*, iv, 17.

⁶ *Regula Pachomii*, 7.

⁷ *Lausiaca History*, 32; *Regula Pachomii*, 31.

⁸ *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, iv, 17.

⁹ *Regula Pachomii*, 34, 87, 94, 121.

¹⁰ *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 13.

¹¹ *Lausiaca History*, 32; *Regula Pachomii*, 107.

¹² *Regula Pachomii*, 50; *Vita S. Pachomii*, 33.

washed their feet. The superior of the monastery gave them permission to visit the house and to assist at the Office. Seculars and even women were entertained in the guest-house.¹

St. Basil sets forth the rules of good hospitality at length. He admits strange monks to the table of the monks of the monastery. As for seculars, they are to be served apart, and their régime, while sufficient, is to be strict so that they may be edified.²

The Pachomian monks were allowed to go out to see their sick relatives or for any other lawful cause, but they had to be accompanied by one of the brethren chosen by the superior and the head of the house. Outside they were not to talk about what went on within the monastery.³ St. Basil orders superiors of monasteries to interrogate those who have been out, upon coming back, as to what they did and how they behaved while out, and as to their keeping of the rules governing their time on leave.⁴

The Pachomian discipline counselled monks to show the utmost reserve in their relations with one another. They were not to hold hands, but whether standing or sitting or walking they were always to keep an elbow's length apart.⁵ Familiarity with children was severely restrained.⁶ St. Basil also requires the children who are received into the monastery as novices to be kept apart from the monks. He lays down exact rules as to the way in which they are to be educated.⁷

Lastly, St. Pachomius and St. Basil are full of care and kindness for sick monks, who are to be looked after in every way that they need.⁸

The sanctions provided by the Pachomian Rule are rigorous. Whoever talked or laughed during the Office or at the refectory, or was late at any service, had to undergo a public penance. It consisted in the defaulter lying prostrate before all the brethren in the church or refectory as long as the abbot wished.⁹ The more noteworthy faults, such as disobedience, theft, bad temper, were publicly punished with the whip, by restriction to bread and water, and finally by exclusion.¹⁰ The sanctions of the Basilian Rule consisted for

¹ *Regula Pachomii*, 51; *Vita S. Pachomii*, 33.

² *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 20.

³ *Regula Pachomii*, 54-56, 86.

⁴ *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 44.

⁵ *Regula Pachomii*, 94.

⁶ *Id.*, 166.

⁷ *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 15.

⁸ *Vita S. Pachomii*, 25; *Regula Pachomii*, 40-46; *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 55; *Regulae brevius tractatae*, 155.

⁹ *Regula Pachomii*, 8-10, 121-125; Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, iv, 16.

¹⁰ *Regula Pachomii*, 149, 151, 173; Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, iv, 16.

the most part in a sort of monastic excommunication, which prevented the guilty from associating with their brethren for a week or a fortnight.¹

St. Pachomius, as is shown by the study of his Rule, was the originator of genius who initiated the coenobitic life. St. Basil, however, was the organizer who set the monastic life on a lasting foundation. He corrected what was unworkable in the Pachomian conception of the monastery, whatever might become, and in fact actually did become, a source of irregularity and relaxation. The play left to the initiative and free choice of the monks is cut down as far as possible for the sake of making their common life very strict and complete.

The Rule of St. Basil, just because it strengthens the life of the community, is of greater moderation than that of Pachomius. As the exercises prescribed by it were strictly the same for all the dwellers in the monastery, they could not tax anyone beyond average endurance, so as to be within the powers of everyone.

St. Basil shows, too, great care as to the way in which authority is exercised by the superior and submitted to by the monks. The fate of a community depends upon the way in which obedience is secured in it. The Rule of St. Basil, which gives an almost absolute authority to the superior, demands that he shall exercise his authority with gentleness, humility, and patience. He must reprimand his subordinates, when necessary, under pain of incurring dread responsibilities, but he is to do it without bitterness, and he is to deal with each monk according to his character and disposition. He will be able to resist the proud and to bear with the infirmities of the weak. Thus the superior must not only be an excellent religious himself, but also be a man in the fullest sense of the word. And if he were to fulfil the duties of his office badly, he must be corrected with prudence by the elder monks of the monastery.²

The religious, for their part, are to receive the orders of their superior in a docile and yielding spirit. They are to obey through persuasion and not by force. St. Basil never orders the use of the whip to punish transgressions against the Rule. Moreover, he tries to train the soul of the monk and to perfect his interior dispositions. He dwells at length on the importance of inward renunciation, the foundation of the monastic life.³ And when he draws up his Rule, he does not word his ordinances dryly, like St. Pachomius, but always gives his reason for them, taking it generally from Holy Scripture. In studying his Rule the religious thus

¹ *Poenae in monachos delinquentes*, 2, 3, 4, etc. (P.G. XXXI, 1305 ff.).

² *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 25, 27, 43.

³ *Id.*, 8.

acquires the monastic spirit and feels himself led, *as a true servant of Christ, doing from the heart*¹ whatever he ought to do.

After the founding of the monasteries there were two kinds of monks: the coenobites and the hermits. The latter, despite the opinion of St. Basil, were fairly generally regarded as of a higher perfection than those who lived in community. At the beginning of the fifth century many monkish writers, particularly St. Jerome² and Cassian,³ advised those who desired to live as anchorites to begin with a novitiate in a monastery. The solitude of the desert was too severe a trial for the hermit who had not gone through his apprenticeship to the monastic life in a community.

But the best of institutions suffer a falling away. Besides the coenobites and hermits, a third sort of monks soon appeared, the *sarabaïtes*,⁴ or religious who dwelt together in twos and threes without any rule, and their reputation was not a good one. Lastly, there were the *gyrovagi*⁵ or vagabonds, who made a fourth class of monks. They were thus named because they could not settle down in any place. Essentially vacillating, tired of everything, seeking everywhere for religious fervour and unable to find it, the *gyrovagi* took advantage of the opportunities of their time and went from monastery to monastery, from town to town, at everybody's cost and at their own as well. They were a disgrace to the monastic life.

This fourfold division of monks is famous in the history of monachism. St. Benedict of Nursia mentions it at the beginning of his Rule.

¹ Eph. vi, 6.

² *Ep. CXXV, ad Rusticum monachum*, 9, 15, 16.

³ *Collatio*, xviii, 5, 6. The same teaching occurs later on until the coenobitic life had entirely supplanted the hermit life.

⁴ St. Jerome, *Ep. XXII ad Eustochium*, 34. Cassian, *Collatio*, xviii, 4.

⁵ Cassian, *Collatio*, xviii, 8.

CHAPTER V

THE ASCETIC TEACHING OF THE EASTERN MONKS OF THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES¹

NO really ascetical writings have come down to us from the earliest of the Eastern monks. They were no writers. Many of them could not write. Their devout discourse was religiously collected by their disciples, and traditionally repeated in the desert cells until some scholarly monk committed it to writing. In his *Life of St. Antony* St. Athanasius gives a summary of that saint's exhortations to the monks of Pispir. Palladius interspersed the narratives of his *Lausiac History* with many sayings of the solitaries he had seen, or of whom he had heard. The author of the *Vitae Patrum* did the same. The monastic Rules of St. Pachomius and St. Basil are full of the same oral ascetic teaching. The *Monastic Institutions* and *Conferences* of Cassian also abound in it.

But after the beginning of the fourth century we find a number of learned monks, some of whom have left us true treatises of monastic asceticism.

Orsicius († about 380), who followed St. Pachomius next but one at Tabennesi, has left us a treatise on the monastic life² which is praised by Gennadius.³

The famous Macarius of Egypt († 390) wrote fifty homilies, called *pneumaticae*, on the spiritual life. Under his name are to be found several ascetical works of doubtful authenticity.⁴ The spirituality of the works attributed to Macarius is founded on the need of interior perfection for attaining holiness. Fasting and giving one's goods to the poor do not sanctify unless one is first of all purified within.

Evagrius of Pontus, so named because he was born there, was a monk who left behind him a reputation for learning and influence. He was ordained deacon by Gregory of Nazianzus, and was present at the second Oecumenical

¹ The Oriental spirituality of this period is, above all, monastic. However, the bishops, in their homilies addressed to the faithful, while teaching as a rule the common evangelical morality, from time to time urge upon all Christians a call to imitate the monks: "All the commands of the law belong to us as well as the monks," says St. John Chrysostom, "except one, the precept of celibacy." *In Matt. Hom.* VII.

² *Doctrina de institutione monachorum* (P.G. XL, 869-894).

³ *De viris illustribus*, 8.

⁴ *De custodia cordis*; *De perfectione in spiritu*; *De oratione*; *De patientia et discretione*; *De elevatione mentis*; *De charitate*; *De libertate mentis* (P.G. XXXIV).

Council of Chalcedon in 381 at Constantinople. An adventure which nearly resulted in his death in the great city drove him into the desert of the Cells, where he died about 399, aged fifty-four. Several collections of his sayings on the monastic life have come down to us.¹ In these, says the historian Sozomen,² he excels in pointing out those of our thoughts and aspirations which respectively lead to virtue or wickedness. He shows how we should improve the former and drive away the latter. Evagrius resolutely inculcates the Stoic *apatheia*, and makes it a fundamental element of his spirituality.³ St. Jerome charges Evagrius with Origenism, and marks him as a forerunner of Pelagius.⁴ In the monastic circles frequented by John Moschus in the sixth century Evagrius was looked upon as a very dangerous heretic.⁵ And St. John Climacus,⁶ while borrowing from the works of Evagrius, is far from accepting the opinions of the monk of Pontus without reservation.

The monk Isaias, living in the fourth century in the wilderness of Scete, is regarded as the writer of many ascetical works.⁷

Many writings on spirituality have come down to us under the name of Mark the Hermit,⁸ who is said to have been a disciple of St. John Chrysostom; but their authorship is uncertain.

Two discourses on asceticism⁹ are generally attributed to Arsenius, an Egyptian solitary who died about 449, and a treatise on *Spiritual Perfection*¹⁰ is usually ascribed to Diadochus. The famous exegete, St. Isidore of Pelusium, in his numerous letters¹¹ has also left us interesting views on asceticism.

But the most important spiritual writer of this period is St. Nilus. This celebrity first of all held a most honourable post at court in Byzantium, then gave up the world and withdrew into the solitude of Mount Sinai with Theodulus, one of

¹ *Capita practica ad Anatolium; Rerum monacharum rationes; Capita XXXII; Sententiae; De octo vitiosis cogitationibus ad Anatolium* (P.G. XL, 1220-1286).

² *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. vi, cap. 30.

³ Cf. *Capita practica ad Anatolium*, 35-42 (P.G. XL, 1232).

⁴ *Ep. CXXXIII, ad Ctesiphonem*, 3.

⁵ *Spiritual Meadow*, ch. 177.

⁶ *Scala Paradisi*, gradus 14.

⁷ Migne, P.G. XL, 1105-1212.

⁸ *Id.*, P.G. LXV, 905-1140.

⁹ *Doctrina et exhortatio; Ad Nomicum tentatorem* (P.G. LXVI, 1617-1626).

¹⁰ *Capitula centum de perfectione spirituali*. See Migne's Latin P.G. LXV, 1167-1212. All works will be quoted under the names of the writers to whom they are attributed, to save trouble.

¹¹ Migne, P.G. LXXXVIII, 177-1646. Isidore was a priest and the abbot of a monastery near Pelusium. He died in 440.

his sons. His reputation for sanctity and learning spread far and wide. He was much sought after for advice, as is shown by his voluminous correspondence. His place of refuge was disturbed by an invasion of Saracens who made a raid upon Mount Sinai, slew many of the monks, and carried off a number of prisoners, among whom was Theodulus. Nilus was spared. He started in search of his son, whom he ended by finding at Elusa. The bishop of that place ordained him priest as well as Theodulus.¹ St. Nilus died on Mount Sinai about 430.

His writings deal with the monastic life,² except one or two written for those living in the world.³ All contain rich teaching set forth in a pleasing and imaginative style. The treatise *On Prayer* is specially remarkable and has often been quoted.

Lastly, let us mention two Syriac writers: Bishop Aphraates or Afrahat, and St. Ephraem, the famous deacon of Edessa.

Aphraates lived in Persia in the middle of the fourth century. He has left us homilies or letters addressed to a friend on the principal questions of faith, morals, and asceticism.⁴ He tells us that in Persia those vowed to continence were called "children of the pact," because they had publicly pledged themselves to keep chastity. The "children of the pact" usually dwelt in their own families; some, however, constituting monastic communities, and others becoming anchorites.

Ephraem the Syrian lived as a hermit from his youth near Nisibis, in the time of the bishop James († 361). When Nisibis fell into the power of the Persians, Ephraem withdrew to a mountain near Edessa, but he often came to preach in the town. He was in relation with St. Basil, who is said to have ordained him a deacon. His numerous writings consist of Biblical commentaries, discourses, and hymns, in which ascetical considerations abound. He is best known by his hymns in honour of Christ and of the Virgin Mary. These won for him the cognomen of *The Harp of the Holy Ghost*.⁵

The monastic spirituality of the East regards the Christian life above all as a combat. It trains for the fray the soul

¹ St. Nilus himself relates these facts: *Narrationes de caede monachorum in monte Sinai*, i to vii (P.G. LXXIX, 589-693).

² *De monastica exercitatione; De monachorum praestantia; De voluntaria paupertate; Oratio ad Albianum; Tractatus ad Eulogium monachum; De octo spiritibus malitiae; De oratione* (P.G. LXXIX).

³ *Peristeria seu tractatus de virtutibus excolendis et vitiis fugiendis; De diversis malignis cogitationibus* (P.G. LXXIX).

⁴ Graffin, *Patrologia syriaca*, I. Cf. J. M. Chavanis, *Les Lettres d'Afrat le Sage de la Perse*, 1908.

⁵ The Syriac liturgy contains many hymns by St. Ephraem. Joseph Simon Assemani published the works of St. Ephraem at Rome in 1732-1746. His edition is incomplete.

desirous of virtue. It makes virtue consist in the extirpation of the vices opposed to it. "Whoever wishes to acquire a virtue," said a monk to his brethren, "will never win it unless he begins by detesting the vice which is its exact opposite. . . . If then thou desirest humility, ever detest pride. If thou wouldst be sober, hate gluttony. If thou wouldst be chaste, loathe impurity."¹

St. Francis of Sales takes a different point of view when he writes of obedience: "Do all for love, and nothing under compulsion; obedience is more to be loved than disobedience to be feared."²

The perfect Christian is he who has entirely destroyed his passions. Total mortification, "holy *apatheia*,"³ in a Christian sense, is the ascetical ideal to be constantly pursued.

Furthermore, the Eastern spiritual writers describe the vices to fight against at much greater length than the virtues to be exercised. The larger part of the monastic asceticism can be reduced, as we shall see, to an enumeration of the vices into which a religious may fall, and an exposition of the means to be used for their correction or prevention. Hesychius († 433), a contemporary of Nilus, and a monk and priest of Jerusalem, expressed the characteristic of this spirituality even in the title he gave to his ascetical work,⁴ *On Striving and Praying*. He set himself to show how to get rid of evil thoughts which give rise to temptations and hinder prayer. And he almost always insists upon the evil to be striven against and crushed, and hardly ever describes the attractions and beauties of the virtues to be practised. Apparently these austere monks would have regarded it as a lack of mortification to dwell too much upon the consoling and attractive aspect of devotion in the way with which St. Francis of Sales so well succeeded. The important position given in their writings to the struggle with evil spirits is a result of the same tendency. In short, their spirituality offers to our view the hard, arduous, and rigorous side of sanctity, as the Fathers of the desert who were so strict with themselves loved to think of it and to approach it.

I shall summarize their spirituality by gathering it together under these various headings: *The excellence of the monastic life—Monastic perfection—The monk's temptations—Prayer—The struggle with evil spirits.*

¹ John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow*, ch. 187 (P.G. LXXXVII, 3064, 3065).

² *Œuvres de S. François de Sales*, Annecy-Lyon, XII, p. 359.

³ St. Nilus, *De malignis cogitationibus*, cap. iii.

⁴ *De temperantia et virtute* (P.G. XCIII, 1480-1544). This Latin title very imperfectly expresses the subject of the work. It is composed of two chapters called centuries, because each is divided into a hundred parts. Such divisions were then very common.

I.—THE EXCELLENCE OF THE MONASTIC LIFE— MONK AND PRIEST

THE monastic calling is as far above the state of the ordinary Christian as the contemplative life is above the active. Our Lord in His reply to Martha (Luke x. 41, 42) declared that the love of contemplation is a good to be put before all things. All other virtues, though good and necessary, nevertheless are in the second rank, and are intended to lead on to contemplation. When Martha spent herself in waiting upon our Lord she was certainly doing a useful and laudable work. Nevertheless Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to His words, had chosen the better part. But the end of the monastic life, the goal of the monk's endeavour, is exactly that of first destroying his faults and then of attaining to constant contemplation of God and the things of God.¹

Such considerations as to the dignity of the monastic life were put before the religious to show them the ideal they were to aim at. And they were often inspired by apologetic reasons.

Indeed, the monastic life, in spite of its successes, or rather on account of them, soon had to encounter detractors. What was the social good of monks who despised the goods of this world and fled from the companionship of their fellows? Is salvation impossible without living in poverty and deprivation? Is not married life as perfect as virginity?² Monasticism wanted to be a living criticism of the world. The world took its revenge by turning it into ridicule, by discrediting it, and even by persecuting it.³

Ecclesiastical writers undertook the defence of the monastic vocation, of the "true philosophy" as it was then called,⁴ and showed the excellence of the life of perfection.

The world only esteems the riches, the honours, and the pleasures of this life. Its eyes are all for princes and kings surrounded with pomp, and magnificence, and luxury. It is grossly mistaken. The monk is richer than kings, for he possesses spiritual goods in abundance. He is also more mighty, for he holds the mastery over all his passions, whereas the king is but the slave of his desires. He does more good, for his prayers influence souls and deliver them from the tyranny of evil spirits. As for the king, he does

¹ Cassian, *Collatio*, i, 8. St. Jerome, *Ep.* XXII, *ad Eustochium*, 24.

² Cf. St. John Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores vitæ monasticæ*, lib. i, 2.

³ Under Valens the monks were driven out of some of the portions of the empire.

⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *De sacerdotio*, i, 3. St. Nilus, *De monastica vita*, i (P.G. LXXIX, 720).

good to the body only. After death, in fine, the monk's salvation is surer and his heavenly reward greater.¹ By the practice of virginity his state is higher than that of the married, and he is much happier.² He is entirely devoted to prayer; his heart is an altar whence, as an incense of sweet savour, perpetually arise the purest of prayers to the Most High.³ Therefore the dignity of the monastic state is very exalted. Happy are they whom the Saviour calls thereto!

The call of God to the monastic life is shown in the main in three ways, either by a direct call when God touches the heart by some inspiration and arouses in it the desire of truly following Christ, or by means of the example of the saints or the exhortations of preachers; or, lastly, by dint of sufferings, such as those caused by the loss of our possessions or by the death of those dear to us.⁴

Alone higher than the monk stands the priest, whose noble position and powers surpass all that there is in this world. St. John Chrysostom and St. Jerome, who so highly exalted the monastic calling, praised the priesthood to an even greater degree.

The functions of the priest are entirely heavenly; this may be said with assurance. Indeed, might one not think oneself taken up into heaven, when one beholds "the Lord immolated and lying upon the altar, the priest celebrating the sacrifice and praying, and the faithful with their lips reddened with the precious blood of Christ?⁵ . . . While he is ministering in the Eucharistic sacrifice the priest is surrounded with angels and the choir of heavenly powers is singing the praises of the divine Victim. . . . A holy old man, who often had visions, one day at the moment of the sacrifice saw a host of angels in splendid attire standing round the altar with bowed heads, like soldiers before the emperor."⁶

The priest is powerful, for he brings down from heaven divine grace upon the sacrifice by invoking the Holy Spirit; by baptismal regeneration he remits sins and cleanses souls; and by his prayers he makes God propitious not only to the living, but also to the dead.⁷

¹ St. John Chrysostom, *Comparatio regis et monachi*, 1-4 (P.G. XLVII, 387 ff.); *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae* ii, 5, 6. Cf. St. Nilus, *De monasticae vitae*, 2 ff.

² See the *De virginitate* by St. John Chrysostom and St. Gregory of Nyssa (P.G. XLIV, 317-416), wherein marriage may be too much depreciated.

³ St. Nilus, *Epistol.* lib. iii, 32 (P.G. LXXIX, 388).

⁴ Cassian, *Collatio*, iii, 4, 5.

⁵ St. John Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio*, iii, 4.

⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio*, vi, 4. Cf. St. Jerome, *Ep.* XIV, *ad Heliodorum*, 8.

⁷ *Id.*, iii, 4; vi, 4. To preserve his monks from temptations to pride and ambition St. Pachomius forbade them to be priests.

The functions of the priest are more important and arduous than those of the monk. He who undertakes them must be eloquent and able to conduct a controversy; and he has to labour much over his sermons, not for vainglory, but to please God and to help the faithful.¹ At death he must render a fearful account to God, for the liability even of his people's sins will rest upon him. Further, the fulfilment of the duties of a priest is a great proof of love for Christ and of charity for Christians.²

Lastly, the sanctity of the priest is far more perfect than that of the monastic life. "The soul of the priest should be purer than sunlight. . . . Pure must be the hands that touch the Lord! Pure must be the tongue that utters the words of the sacrifice!"³ And nevertheless he is exposed to greater risks than the monk in his isolation, and he has fewer means of preservation. Therefore his virtue must be surer and he has to take greater precautions, especially in his ministrations to women.⁴ He must excel in disinterestedness⁵ and all the virtues which St. Paul requires of a bishop in his *Pastoral Epistles*.⁶

II.—MONASTIC PERFECTION

ASCETICAL writers have attempted to define that perfection which should be greater in the priest than in the monk.

Some ascetics were rather formal in their conception of it and inclined to regard it as consisting in external acts of penance.⁷ But "fasts and vigils, meditation on the Scriptures and deprivation of all the goods of this world are not perfec-

¹ Cf. St. Jerome, *Ep. LII, ad Nepotianum*, 8; *Docente te in ecclesia, non clamor populi, sed gemitus suscitetur. Lacrymae auditorum laudes tuae sint. Sermo presbyteri Scripturarum lectione conditus sit. Nolo te declamatorem esse et rabulam garrulumque sine ratione, sed mysteriorum peritum et sacramentorum Dei tui eruditissimum.*

² *De Sacerdotio*, iv, 3, 4; v, vi, 1; ii, 1.

³ *Id.*, vi, 4.

⁴ *De Sacerdotio*, iii, 17; vi, 8, 9. Cf. St. Jerome, *Ep. LII, ad Nepotianum*, 5: *Hospitiolum tuum aut raro aut nunquam mulierum pedes terant. Omnes puellas et virgines Christi, aut aequaliter ignora, aut aequaliter dilige. Ne sub eodem tecto mansites, nec in praeterita castitate confidas. Nec David sanctior, nec Salomone potes esse sapientior. Memento semper quod paradisi colonum de possessione sua mulier ejecerit (Gen. iii). . . . Si propter officium clericatus, aut vidua a te visitatur, aut virgo, nunquam domum solus introeas. . . . Solus cum sola, secreto et absque arbitro vel teste ne sedeas. . . . Caveto omnes suspensiones, et quidquid probabiliter fingi potest ne fingatur ante devita.*

⁵ *De Sacerdotio*, vi, 8. St. Jerome, *id.*, 5: *Obsecro te . . . ne lucra saeculi in Christi quaeras militia, ne plus habeas quam quando clericus esse coepisti. . . . Negotiatorem clericum et ex inope divitem, ex ignobili gloriosum quasi quamdam pestem fuge.*

⁶ *De Sacerdotio*, vi, 5. Cf. St. Jerome, *Ep. XIV, ad Heliodorum*, 9. *Lausiac History*, Prologue.

tion but the means for attaining it."¹ Does not St. Paul say that without charity giving away one's possessions availeth nothing? For "neither is eating really anything, nor is abstinence anything, but faith that results in works through charity."²

Nevertheless, if voluntary surrender of earthly possessions does not make monastic perfection, it is an indispensable condition of it. "The highest point of apostleship and the crown of perfection," says St. Jerome, "is to sell all that one has and give it to the poor, so as to rise unweighted and free from all ties towards Christ."³ He who would be perfect, like Abraham, must therefore leave his country and his kin. If he have possessions, he must strip himself of them; if he has none, so much the better, he is free from a heavy burden; poor himself, he can follow Jesus who is poor.⁴

But if we consider perfection in itself, it is inward, for "the first thing of all for us to purify," says Arsenius the hermit, "is the inward man."⁵ It consists in charity, which is nothing but the purity of a heart stripped of its passions, adorned with virtue and united with God. Such is the mind of St. Paul in his description of the character of charity. For "not to envy, not to be proud, not to be unkind, not to be self-seeking, not to rejoice in iniquity, what is all this but to offer perpetually to God a perfect heart, a heart most pure and carefully guarded from all assaults of the passions and whatever else may disturb it?"⁶

Hence to be perfect is before all "to be purified from all sin and freed from every disorderly affection."⁷ It means through ascetical practices to have reached a passionless state, in which the soul enjoys perfect tranquillity in the closest union with God by charity.⁸

To be perfect, then, necessarily implies a complete exercise

¹ Cassian, *Collatio*, i, 7. Cf. Macarius of Egypt, *Liber de custodia cordis*, 12: Voluntary poverty, psalmody, fasting and prayer are good things, but they are of little avail to those who have not established within themselves the foundation of humility whereof Christ is the example. Cf. St. Jerome, *Ep.* CXLVIII, 22.

² *Lausiac History*, Prologue.

³ St. Jerome, *Ep.* CXXX, *ad Demetriadem*, 14.

⁴ *Id.*, *Ep.* CXXV, *ad Rusticum monachum*, 20: *Nudus nudum sequi Jesum*.

⁵ *Doctrina et exhortatio*, i (P.G. LXVI, 1617).

⁶ Cassian, *Collatio*, i, 6.

⁷ Macarius the Egyptian, *Homil.* viii, 1 (P.G. XXXIV, 508).

⁸ *Apatheia*, in its most Christian sense, is regarded by Eastern writers as an element of perfection. See Macarius the Egyptian, *id.*; *Liber de elevatione mentis*, 20 (P.G. XXXIV, 905); *Liber de libertate mentis*, 4-6 (P.G. XXXIV, 938 ff.). St. Nilus, *De malignis cogitationibus*, iii. Cassian takes the same view: *Callatio*, i, 6, 7; ix, 2. In the sixth century St. John Climacus, summing up Greek spirituality, attaches much importance to Christian *apatheia*. Cf. *Scala Paradisi*, gradus 29.

of all the virtues in correlation. By rising entirely above the passions the soul makes all good habits rule within it. This is inevitable, for if only one of its powers were released from goodness there would be no perfection. To fast and give way to anger, to meditate on Holy Scripture, and to despise one's brethren, is not to be perfect.¹ "Better is the layman who helps his neighbour than the anchorite who shows no kindness to his brother," rightly remarks Evagrius of Pontus.² Hence the monk who aspires to be perfect must try to acquire all virtues by the complete mortification of his unruly desires. And the collections of monastic directions give particular counsels to lead on the religious by degrees to the purity of heart and all-round practice of the virtues that make up perfection.³

Thus defined, perfection implies preservation from all sin, however venial it may be. It also assumes the total destruction of the passions, to such a degree as never again to be disturbed by them. Such perfection as this is ideal; it is unattainable in this world. For however holy a Christian may be, he cannot escape venial sins of fragility; and however great his austerities, he will never in this life so far succeed in the mortification of his passions as not to feel temptation.

The ascetical writers of the East were indeed convinced that such perfection was not of this world. Macarius the Egyptian declared that he had never met with a monk who was truly perfect. He had seen those who were perfect in some respects, but not one of them in all, "for sin always lurks in some recess of man's soul."⁴

St. Augustine is still more definite in teaching that man cannot hope to attain to absolute perfection here below. His duty is ever to tend towards it. Hence for the Christian perfection means a constant striving towards the better. This, indeed, is the conclusion to which the monks were led by experience. We draw nearer and nearer to perfection, says Macarius the Egyptian; we go towards it by degrees, just as the child is gradually formed in its mother's womb, and as the grain of barley or wheat rises and grows imperceptibly.⁵

The ascetical authors of this period do not appear to give any definite teaching as to the number of stages to be traversed to attain perfection. Some of them reckon that

¹ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate*, 17, 18.

² *Sentences* (P.G. XL, 1280).

³ Cf. St. Athanasius, *Synagma ad Monachos* (P.G. XXVIII, 835). *Vitae Patrum*, lib. V, libell. i, 22. Diadochus, *Capitula centum de perfectione spirituali* (P.G. LXV, 1167 ff.).

⁴ *Homil.* VIII, 5; XV, 7.

⁵ *Homil.* XV, 40; *Liber de custodia cordis*, 11.

there are twelve.¹ However, according to the teaching fairly generally attributed to St. Basil,² in the struggle with evil for the winning of virtue the Christian passes in order through the three steps of fear, hope, and love.

At the beginning of his conversion the fear of hell is what turns him away from evil; he behaves as a slave who obeys from fear of punishment. Is not fear the foundation of piety? "Just as no poison," says Pachomius, "can withstand fire, so are all temptations of impurity, ambition, discouragement, envy and avarice destroyed by the fear of God."³ If the beginner perseveres, fear is followed by hope of the reward of heaven and by the desire to win it. This, too, is an interested motive; it is that of the mercenary who works for what he can get. Lastly, the Christian ends by being led by the love of Christ and of goodness. He then reaches the state of God's children who are disinterested.⁴

Besides this theological conception of perfection, spiritual writers also showed what the practice of perfection implied in the case of each kind of monk, what should be done in the different sorts of monastic life each had to lead in order to avoid all evil and practise goodness in its integrity.

In their addresses on the eremitic and coenobitic life superiors took pains to explain what was most perfect in the case of the anchorite and the coenobite. For the hermit, lacking everything in the desert, perfection consists in keeping himself entirely detached in spirit from worldly goods, and in living in union with Christ as far as the weakness of human nature allows. For the coenobite, living in community under a superior, perfection means the total mortification and crucifixion of self-will, and in having no care for the morrow, as the Gospel directs (Matt. vi. 34).⁵

The monastic heads knew from experience how few realize such rules of perfection, and that all the religious cannot be regarded as models.⁶ But at least they set before them the obligation they are under of trying to attain the standard of perfection that God demanded of them. Is it not to the spiritual sluggard that the Lord says: *No man putting his*

¹ Macarius of Egypt, *Homil.* VIII, 4.

² Cf. Dorotheus († about 630), *Doctrina*, xiv, 7 (P.G. LXXXVIII, 1785).

³ *Acta Sanctorum*, 14 May, p. 319. Cf. St. Jerome, *Adversus Pelagianos*, 5.

⁴ Cassian, *Collatio*, xi, 6 ff.; *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, iv, 25, 39, 43. Cf. Diadochus, cap. 93.

⁵ Cassian, *Collatio*, xix, 8; *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, v, 40. Cf. St. Jerome, *Ep.* XXII, *ad Eustochium*, 35; *In Hieremiam, ad Thren.*, iii, 27.

⁶ Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, v, 4; *Collatio*, i, 1.

hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.¹ Thus the monk who neglects his own perfection is lacking in a grave duty.²

III.—THE MONK'S TEMPTATIONS

To attain to perfection the first and the most difficult thing to do is to overcome one's besetting sins.

They reckoned that there were eight capital sins which summed up all the evil committed in this world: *greediness*, or rather *gluttony*, *impurity*, *avarice*, *anger*, *melancholy*, *disrelish of the spiritual life*, *vainglory* and *pride*.³ Such is the list given by almost all the ascetical writers of those days, who dwell sometimes inordinately upon the consideration of the vices and the way to combat them.⁴

They carefully explained the nature of these sins, the way in which they assault and take possession of the soul, and the weapons to be used in repelling them. Before joining battle, must we not get to know the character and the tactics of our adversary?

We are usually ignorant of our sins and passions. God must make them known to us, and the teaching of the ancients, founded on experience, must be our instructors. Further, it is essential for young monks, above all, to try to reveal their defects to their elders to obtain their advice, if they desire self-reformation.⁵

Among these sins, some have their seat in the body, such as gluttony and impurity; these are carnal sins rooted in concupiscence, and they feed upon the disorderly pleasures of the senses. Others dwell in the souls that they disturb, excite and cast down, such as anger and melancholy, which are called spiritual sins.⁶

The carnal sins must be attacked by keeping from the senses all that stimulates them, by banishing any sensuous

¹ *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, iv, 36.

² St. Jerome, *Ep. XIV, ad Heliodorum*, 7: *Perfectum (monachum) esse nolle, delinquere est*.

³ Cassian, *Collatio*, v, 2: *Octo sunt principalia vitia quae humanum infestant genus, id est, primum gastrimargia, quod sonat ventris ingluvies; secundum fornicatio; tertium philargyria, id est, avaritia sive amor pecuniae; quartum ira; quintum tristitia; sextum acedia, id est anxietas sive taedium cordis; septimum cenodoxia, id est jactantia seu vana gloria; octavum superbia*.

⁴ Evagrius of Pontus, *De octo vitiosis cogitationibus*, 1; St. Nilus, *De octo spiritibus malitiae* (P.G. LXXIX, 1145-1164); Hesychius, *De temperantia et virtute*, Centuria ii, 75. Cassian treats of these sins at length: *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, v to xii. See also the *Vitae Patrum*, v and vii (P.L. LXXIII, 851-992, 1025-1066).

⁵ Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, v, 2; vii, 12.

⁶ *Id.*, *Collatio*, v, 3, 4. Cf. St. Basil, *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 16. Diadochus, *Capita de perfectione spirituali*, cap. 99 (P.G. LXV, 1210).

representation from the mind, and by undertaking corporal mortifications. Energy of will can overcome spiritual sins. But we must not forget that without God's help we cannot of ourselves destroy our sinful propensities. Thus the monk must stir up within himself deep feelings of humility, and be thoroughly convinced of his inability to conquer all the enemies of his salvation in his own strength.¹ He must resort to prayer. He who would refine gold must maintain the fire with ceaseless ardour; and thus the religious who desires to destroy the worldly and sinful affections of his heart must continually sustain the fire of prayer in it with the "recollection of God and the Lord Jesus Christ."²

The vices make a sort of conspiracy. They help one another to take possession of the soul of the religious. Therefore all of them must be attacked for safety's sake. It is dwelling in illusion to think a vice can be successfully resisted without simultaneously fighting against all the rest, just as it is impossible to advance in one virtue without trying to practise all of them.³

In addressing his followers St. Antony makes use of the thought of the Last Things as eminently fitted to stir up the courage of the monks in their struggle with evil. On rising in the morning, they must say to themselves that they will not perhaps live until the evening; and in taking their rest at night, that perhaps they may never see the morning. Hence the Christian must never be anxious about this world's goods, which are so suddenly left behind, but seek such as will gain heaven for him. Besides, eternal life is cheap to buy. For a few years of toil in the service of God an eternal reward may be won. Hence heavenly gains are unlike those of this world, which can only be had at a price equivalent to their worth. Therefore we must never tire of doing good and of practising virtue.⁴

St. Antony also taught his disciples how to overcome their faults and to grow in virtue by a method that became famous. He who would truly be virtuous and who desires to attain the heights of perfection, said he, will watch his brethren and endeavour to imitate the virtue in which each excels. One is remarkable for his gentleness, another for his love of prayer, a third for his chastity. Like the bee, the monk will pilfer to some extent in all directions to make spiritual honey for the improvement and sustenance of his soul.⁵

¹ Cassian, *Collatio*, v, 15.

² Diadochus, *Capita de perfectione spirituali*, cap. 97.

³ St. Basil, *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 16. Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, v, 1.

⁴ *Vita Antonii*, 16. Hesychius, *De temperantia et virtute*, Centuria, i, 17 (P.G. XCIII, 1483).

⁵ St. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, 4 (P.G. XXVI, 845); Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, v, 4.

Frequent examination of the motions of one's heart and of the dispositions of one's soul is also necessary for the correction of one's faults. The exercise which was afterwards known as the examination of conscience is recommended by the masters of the monastic life as an excellent means of planning a campaign against one's passions.¹

Lastly, it is important to observe that a fairly considerable time is required for the amendment of defects and the acquisition of virtues. Long and patient effort, one may be sure, is demanded of him who desires sanctification!

Nor does a soul suddenly fall back into the vice that has been got rid of. Generally backsliding is preceded by some evil thought, by a lustful look, or by continuous neglect of self-examination. Virtue weakens little by little, vice creeps into the heart insensibly, and works sad ruin in it.²

To these general principles, as we shall see, more special counsels with regard to each fault in particular were added to equip the monks fully for the fight against the enemies of their souls.

Gluttony is put at the head of the list of vices against which the monk must be on his guard. How can we help being surprised that monks who fasted and were accustomed to coarse fare were bidden in the first place to resist temptations to insobriety? But it was just because of their fasting that they ran the risk in their one meal of eating more than was necessary and of falling into the sin of what was called gluttony (*gastrimargia*, γαστριμαργία). For even though fasting and only partaking of rough fare, one may eat too much. Now, it is not only the quality but also the quantity of foods that endangers chastity. There is a very close connection between impurity and fulness of stomach, even though the provisions be poor.³ Moreover, St. Pachomius and St. Basil, while liberally permitting necessities to the monks, counsel them not to eat to the limit of satiety. The quantity of food anyone may take without failing in temperance varies according to age and temperament and health. Each one must discover what is good for him.⁴ On the other

¹ Cassian, *Collatio*, v, 14.

² Cassian, *Collatio*, v, 17; *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, ix, 6.

³ St. Basil, *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 18. St. Jerome, *Ep.* LIV, ad Furiam, 10: *Nonnulli vitam pudicam appetentium in medio itinere corruunt, dum solam abstinenciam carnum curant et leguminibus onerant stomachum quae moderate parceque sumpta innoxia sunt. Ad Iovinianum*, ii, 12: *Etiam ex vilissimis cibis vitanda est satietas: nihil enim ita obruit animum ut plenus venter et exaestuans.* St. Nilus, *De octo spiritibus malitiae*, 4: Gluttony is the mother of intemperance (P.G. LXXIX, 1148).

⁴ St. Basil, *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 16, 18-20. Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, v, 5, 8, 9. *Cl. Vitae Patrum*, VII, 1: To eat much and stop before satiety is more meritorious than eating a little and becoming sated.

hand, excess in an opposite direction, such as subjecting oneself to indiscreet privations, must be avoided; it would lead to depression and inability to pray and work.¹

Hermits and monks in their fervour greatly dreaded gluttony. In their struggle against it many of them abstained from necessary food, fasted terribly and even to excess. "From my youth up," said Serapion the monk, "I have been tempted to avarice and gluttony (γαστριμαργία) and sensualism. I have got rid of two, avarice and sensualism; they no longer trouble me. I cannot get rid of my propensity to gluttony. It is four days since I have eaten anything, and my stomach continues to trouble me, and to call for the customary food without which I cannot live."²

Impurity (πορνεία) was the vice most dreaded by the monks, and the one which sometimes violently tempted them even in the solitude of the desert. Many of them had led a more or less wild life before taking to the monastic life, and, like St. Jerome in the desert of Chalcis,³ they found it hard to banish the recollection of worldly pleasures. Others had a dreamy disposition unsuited to a life of solitude, and this proved troublesome. Lastly "the spirit of impurity . . . always torments most severely those who live a life of continence."⁴ Hence the religious required to know definitely how to behave in order to guard their virtue in the "war to the death"⁵ they had to wage with impurity.

Chastity consists "in a total renunciation of all that conduces to sensualism and forbidden pleasures."⁶ Many go astray in this matter. "They keep corporal virginity, and sin in spirit" through evil desires and guilty thoughts.⁷ Besides, there can be no purity of act without that of the heart, which must come first, and this demands the prompt refusal of every thought and imagination and recollection that may disturb the soul.⁸

¹ Cassian, *id.*, v, 9.

² *Lausiack History*, 37.

³ *Ep.* XXII, *ad Eustochium*, 7: "How often in the wide wilderness, burning in the heat of the sun, I imagined myself amidst the pleasures of Rome! . . . I who through fear of hell had condemned myself to this prison infested with scorpions and wild beasts, saw myself in imagination carried away into dances with the young women of Rome. I remember how often I spent the night and day in crying out and smiting my breast. . . . I even dreaded my cell, as if it were the accomplice of my thoughts." Cf. *Ep.* CXXV, *ad Rusticum monachum*, 12. Largent, *Saint Jerome*, pp. 11-13, Paris, 1898.

⁴ Evagrius, *De octo vitiosis cogitationibus*, 3. Cf. *Vita Hilarionis*, 5.

⁵ "Immane bellum," Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, vi, 1.

⁶ St. Basil, *Regulae fusiùs tractatae*, 19.

⁷ *Vitae Patrum*, lib. V, libell. v, 2.

⁸ St. Basil, *Regulae fusiùs tractatae*, 5. Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, vi, 12, 13.

Hence the evil of impurity affects both body and mind. The body inclines us to evil, says St. Antony, by its very nature, which inflames us with passion, by the food we give it, and by the snares which the devil sets for it. The mind tempts us to sin by evil thoughts and memories.¹ These two enemies must be attacked by a twofold warfare. By fasting and temperance the body must be cut off from what sustains the passions. Evil thoughts must be stifled in the beginning by meditation on Holy Scripture, by work, by vigilance, by fleeing from the world and dangerous occasions, by strictness in one's relations with women.² For the protection of purity, it must go along with many other virtues as its guardians and helpers, especially with humility, distrust of self, a penitential spirit, and the fear of eternal punishment.³ Lastly, much prayer is needed; for our Lord bids us fast and pray to drive away the spirit of impurity.⁴

The temptations of the monks of the East are recounted at length by their historians because they held a prominent place in their lives, and were a real nightmare to many of them. Anti-religious critics have made use of this to defame the Fathers of the desert, regarding them as truly guilty of the acts to which they were tempted.⁵ Nothing could be more unfair. No doubt there were bad monks who followed their evil propensities. Historians related their falls quite frankly.⁶ How could these inevitable exceptions tarnish the goodness of the rest? Far from being guilty, the Fathers of the desert rather exaggerated the strictness of their obligations.

So great was their dread of all kinds of impurity that they sometimes pushed their love of modesty to the extreme of eccentricity,⁷ and shunned women to the point of being unbending towards their sisters and even to their own mothers.⁸ They even regarded as culpable physiological phenomena that are entirely involuntary,⁹ and many of them thought that true and perfect chastity implied such a condition of the senses as prevented their recurrence even in sleep.¹⁰ But however

¹ *Vitae Patrum*, lib. V, libell. v, 1. Cf. *Lausiack History*, 23. Cassian, *Collatio*, xii, 8. St. Nilus, *De malignis, cogitationibus*, 1, 2, etc.

² Cf. St. Nilus, *De octo spiritibus malitiarum*, 4.

³ *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, v, 10. St. Basil, *Regulae fusius tractatae*, 33. *Vita Sancti Pachomii*, 16.

⁴ Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, vi, 1, 2; *Collatio*, v, 4.

⁵ Cf. Ladeuze, *Étude sur le cénobitisme pachomien*, pp. 332-366.

⁶ *Lausiack History*, 36, 47.

⁷ *Id.*, 8, 37, 39. Cf. Cassian, *Collatio*, vii, 26.

⁸ *Vitae Patrum*, lib. III, 33, 34; lib. V, libell. iv, 61, 68. *Vita Pachomii*, 28.

⁹ Cf. *Lausiack History*, 11, 23, 37.

¹⁰ Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, vi, 10: *Cujus puritatis (perfectae) hoc erit evidens indicium ac plena probatio, si vel nulla imago decipiens quiescentibus nobis et in soporem laxatis occurrat, vel certe interpellens nullas concupiscentiae motus valeat excitare.* Cf. vi, 20, 22, *Collatio*, xii, 7.

perfect a man's virtue may be, it will not totally banish temptation and the rebellion of the flesh. Does not St. Paul, despite all his sanctity, speak of the body of death from which he longed to be delivered?¹

What led some ascetics to make mistakes on this matter was their conviction that mortification would enable them to rise so far above their passions as to become in a way impassible, and thus beyond the reach of evil. Some monks thought their virtue was imperfect so long as they fell short of such total insensibility, as if virtue consisted in insensibility and not in the ceaseless conquest of the senses by the will.

Avarice or the love of money (*φιλαργυρία*) is usually due in the first instance to an imperfect training in detachment from temporal possessions at the beginning of the religious life.

The monk who has failed to acquire the spirit of poverty ends by surmising that putting aside a little money to supplement the scantiness of the food and clothing provided by the monastery is a measure of prudence. If he happens to fall ill he will be glad to have a few comforts in addition to those accorded by the Rule. Lastly, his slackness makes him feel it to be a hardship to be always living in the same monastery, and if he is penniless he will not be able to undertake the expense of travelling from one monastery to another. Hence he is tempted to obtain money, even by rather dishonest means.² *Avarice* may also taint all a monk's virtues and finally ruin his vocation.³ It is easy in such matters to fall into illusions. One day St. Basil said to a great man, a senator who had become a monk and kept part of his possessions so as not to have to work and not to suffer from monastic poverty: "You have given up being a senator, but you don't make a monk."⁴

The way to avoid *avarice* is to have nothing at all of one's own and tear the desire to possess ruthlessly out of one's heart. The monastic traditions strictly forbade the religious to keep any money, however small the amount. Superiors did not shrink from inflicting exemplary penalties upon those who broke this rule.

"A monk of the desert of Nitria, much more from thrift than from *avarice*, left at his death a hundred small golden coins which he had earned in weaving flax. The monks of the district—there were about five thousand of them living in separate cells—took counsel as to what was to be done with the money. It should be given to the poor, said some: give it

¹ Rom. vii, 24.

² Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, vii, 1, 7. Evagrius, 4.

³ Cassian, *id.*, vii, 8. St. Nilus, *De octo spiritibus*, 7.

⁴ Cassian, *id.*, vii, 9. *Vitae Patrum*, lib. V, libell. vi, 10.

to the Church, thought others; and some held that it should be sent to the relations of the deceased. But Macarius, Pambo, Isidore, and others who were called Fathers, inspired by the Holy Ghost, decided to bury the money along with its owner, saying: *Thy money perish with thee* (Acts viii. 20). And think them not merciless, for this example filled all of Egypt with such terror, that it was considered a crime to leave a single piece of gold behind one."¹

Such, indeed, was the opinion of fervent monks who pushed their contempt for this world's goods to its extreme limits, as we are told by those who were edified by beholding it.²

Melania the Younger and her husband Pinianus³ went to see the monks in the outskirts of Alexandria. "They came to the cell of a holy man, the Abbot Hephestion, and begged him to accept their offering of a little gold. As he sternly said he would do nothing of the sort, Blessed Melania searched through the saint's cell, looking for utensils. She found he had nothing in the world except a mat, a basket with a few dry biscuits in it, and a small salt-cellar; and being deeply moved by the holy man's inexpressible and heavenly riches, she hid the gold in the salt and hurried out, fearing the old man might discover her stratagem. She and Pinianus begged his blessing, and took care to hasten away. But their evasion failed. When they had crossed the river, the man of God overtook them and cried out as he held the gold: 'What can I do with this?' Blessed Melania answered: 'You can give it to the poor.' But he protested that he would not keep the money nor give it away, for he lived in a desert, and none of the poor came that way. He insisted upon refusing, but could not persuade them to take the money back. Then the holy man threw it into the river. Many were the holy anchorites, many the most venerable virgins who refused all gifts. The Blessed Melania used pious devices to hide money in their cells, so much did she regard it as a spiritual gain, an immense advantage to the soul, to help the saints."⁴

Anger (*ira*, ὀργή) is a feeling of indignation or irritation against one who has injured or who is supposed to have injured us. It fills the soul with wrath. Even while we are praying it fills our agitated mind with thought of the person who has offended us.⁵ It blinds the mind, upsets one's

¹ St. Jerome, *Ep.* XXII, *ad Eustochium*, 33. Cf. Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, vii, 21: *Nec minuto quidem nummo conscientia monachi polluitur.*

² Cf. *Vitae Patrum*, lib. V, libell. vi.

³ As to these, see next Chapter.

⁴ Gerontius, *Vita Melaniae* (G. Goyau, *Sainte Melanie*, p. 152).

⁵ Evagrius, *De octo vitiosis cogitationibus*, 6. St. Nilus, *De octo spiritibus*, 9.

judgment, and makes us incapable of deciding upon any course with wisdom.¹

Any monk who strives after perfection and fights the good fight must know how to keep from such a vice. The only anger that is lawful is the wrath he must turn upon himself and against his own temptations.² He is forbidden to cherish, even for a moment, any anger against his brethren, for he has to be constant in prayer, and before praying our Saviour bids everyone to be reconciled with his brother (Matt. v. 23, 24).³

To guard against anger, we must never think we have a reason for being angry with anyone, and constantly remind ourselves that we cannot pray if we bear hatred in our hearts.⁴ Lastly, we must practise humility, without which it is impossible to conquer anger and be patient. Why, indeed, do we take offence, unless it is because we are not humble enough? Further, it is by practising humility that we come to be patient, and not by fleeing from association with our fellows.⁵ Utterly mistaken were the misanthropic bad-tempered monks, of whom Cassian tells,⁶ who could not put up with petty vexations such as are inevitable in community life, and left their monasteries to go and live in the desert.

The great majority of monks, on the contrary, practised patience to perfection under contradiction and in affliction. Under calumny⁷ they remained calm. They were happy in enduring sickness and infirmity. We hear of an old man who was almost always ill spending a whole year in exceptional freedom from suffering. This filled him with grief, and he wept and said: "God has forsaken me; this year He has left me to myself." "If bodily ailments bind thee," another monk was fond of saying, "be not pusillanimous. For if God wills thee to be weak in body, who art thou to be angry about it? . . . Bear it with patience, and pray God to give thee what thou needest, that is to say, that His will be done."⁸

There are two kinds of *sadness*: one "according to God," who "worketh penance unto salvation" (2 Cor. vii. 10), the other of the devil and working death. It is with the latter that we have to do here.

Sadness or dejection (*tristitia*, λύπη) often arises from deprivation of the pleasures of the world in which the monk

¹ Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, viii, 1.

² Cassian, *id.*, viii, 5, 8.

³ Cassian, *id.*, vii, 12. Cf. St. Nilus, *De oratione*, 13, 21.

⁴ Cassian, *id.*, 21.

⁵ *Collatio*, xviii, 13, 16.

⁶ *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, viii, 15.

⁷ Cassian, *Collatio*, xviii, 15.

⁸ *Vitae Patrum*, lib. V, libell. vii, 41, 45.

has to live. The memory of his home and family and former life fills him with regret and melancholy. Sometimes even his relations beg him to leave the monastery, and this culminates in utterly ruining his peace of mind.¹

Dejection may also be a result of annoyance from which he has to suffer. Sometimes, too, it invades us for no apparent reason.² It casts down the soul and hinders it from devoting itself to prayer and the contemplation of the things of God. It makes one impatient and irritable. It eats into the heart as moth eats into clothing, and as worms eat into wood.³

The monk will find a cure for dejection in the company of his brethren, and in the joy he ought to find in the thought of the eternal gains he hopes to win hereafter.⁴

The vice called *acedia* (ἀκηδία) is a sort of downheartedness, slackness, distaste and boredom akin to dejection.⁵ It was termed "the demon of the midday," *daemonium meridianum* (Ps. xc. 6), because it was an evil that beset the monk about the fourth hour (ten o'clock in the morning) and tormented him until the eighth hour (two o'clock in the afternoon). The monk feels the length of the day, that the sun is moving slowly, or even as if it did not move at all, and as if there were fifty hours in the day. He gets tired; he looks out of his cell-window; furthermore, he leaves his cell, scrutinizes the sun and reckons how long it is to none, when it will no doubt be time for a meal. Everything is a burden to him and bores him; the place, the work, and even the life he has to live. The smallest friction arouses his irritation against others. He repines at having nothing to do and because he feels a void within and cannot enjoy anything. He plans to change his monastery so as to be better off, and even comes to regret that he has given up the world. His uneasiness of mind may make him quit his monastery. Then he becomes a vagabond (*gyrovagus*) monk, who goes in search of fervour on all sides and never finds it.⁶

The vice of *acedia* wrought destruction in monastic communities. In the prologue to his *Lausiac History* Palladius gives us to understand that many monks failed in their vows "through clinging to life, and through despondency (ἀκηδία) and love of pleasure."

Work is an excellent cure for despondency and chagrin. And it was rigorously ordered in monasteries. To persevere in the silence of the cell is also an effective way of overcoming

¹ Evagrius, *De octo vitiosis cogitationibus*, 5. St. Nilus, *De octo spiritibus*, 11.

² Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, ix, 4, 13.

³ *Id.*, ix, 1, 3.

⁴ *Id.*, ix, 7, 13.

⁵ *Id.*, x, 1.

⁶ Evagrius, 7. Cf. Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.*, x, 2. St. Nilus, *De octo spiritibus*, 13, 14.

boredom, for it ends by making a life of retirement attractive. "Keep to thy cell, and it will grow sweet to thee," says the writer of the *Imitation of Christ*.¹ If the cell be not kept, if the monk tries to get rid of his depression by going with his brethren, the confinement grows unbearable and all desire for perfection dies away.² Lastly, discouragement must be dealt with by frontal attack. It is not by shirking duties, which it makes repugnant, that one can counter it, but on the contrary by endeavouring to fulfil them with all one's energy day by day.³

Vainglory (*jactantia seu vana gloria*, *κενοδοξία*) is a very subtle vice that easily wins its way into the hearts of the good and subjects them to illusions. It makes one wish others to know one's conflicts with the devil as well as the extent of one's austerities.⁴ All may give rise to vainglory in the soldier of Christ; his demeanour, his expression, his gait, his voice, his work, his vigils, his fasts, his prayers, his learning, his silence, his obedience, his humility and patience. Nothing will ward it off, neither solitude, nor the desert, nor old age.⁵

Temptations to vainglory were fairly common with the monks. Macarius of Alexandria only had to hear of some new form of austerity to take it up. "When he heard some people say that the monks of Tabennesi throughout Lent ate uncooked food, he determined to partake of no cooked food for seven years."⁶ As a matter of fact, the monks of Tabennesi had a very strict régime during Lent. Macarius wished to surpass them. He went to live amongst them, and stood throughout the whole of Lent and ate next to nothing. Pachomius said to him in bidding him farewell: "I am grateful to you for having made my little children feel the weight of your fist. It will keep them from becoming puffed up by their ascetic exercises."⁷

In the prologue to his *Lausiack History* Palladius mentions monks who took upon themselves to eat hardly anything through "an unreasonable presumption, to please men," or else "through a spirit of rivalry and vanity." But, he adds, to partake of food and even of wine to a reasonable extent is better than fasting and drinking water with pride.

The monks, even those who were the most discreet and

¹ I, xx, 5: *Cella continuata dulcescit, et male custodita taedium generat.*

² Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.* x, 5, 12.

³ *Id.*, x, 25.

⁴ Evagrius, 8; Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.* xi, 1, 2. St. Nilus, *De octo spiritibus*, 15.

⁵ Cassian, *Id.*, xi, 3, 4, 6, 8.

⁶ *Lausiack History*, 18 (A. Lucot, p. 119).

⁷ *Id.* (A. Lucot, p. 131). Cf. *Vitae Patrum*, lib. V, libell. viii.

humble, were tempted to vanity. They led such a hard life, so fitted to make them famous throughout the East, and sometimes even in the West. Was not St. Antony tempted to glory in his prolonged sojourn in the desert, when he learnt that Paul of Thebes had surpassed him in this respect?¹ The desire to escape such temptations and not to run the risk of losing the merits of their penances through vainglory induced these holy men to bury themselves deeper and deeper in solitude, to withdraw themselves from the admiration of those who came to see them and besiege them in their cells.² They also used ingenious devices to defeat the subtle plots of the spirit of vanity.

"If I felt," said Melania the Younger, who had been very wealthy and had embraced voluntary poverty, "that the Enemy was taking advantage of my privations to sow the seed of pride in my mind, I would answer him: 'Is it such a great matter to fast for a week while others go for forty days together without food; and to take no oil, when others abstain even from plain water?' And if the Enemy were tempting me to be puffed up for the sake of my poverty, then, confiding in the power of God, I would reply to his unspeakable wickedness: 'How many have been taken captive by the barbarians and stripped of liberty! How many have incurred the disfavour of kings and lost their property and lives! How many, too, have become poor through their relations' faults! Others have gone under through the audacity of sycophants or robbers, and from being rich have become suddenly poor. Have we, then, done something great, when we despise the goods of this world for the sake of those that are indestructible and everlasting?' And when I saw the Evil One returning to the attack and suggesting to me thoughts of vainglory because instead of linen and all sorts of silks I was wearing hair-cloth, then I ruthlessly humbled myself by thinking of those who are naked in public squares, or lying bare and shivering on plain mats. And thus it was that God drove the devil away from me."³

Superiors of monasteries, as an excellent means of avoiding temptations to vainglory, recommended the monks to do nothing that made them seem singular in the eyes of their brethren. Each one was to follow the common rule, and if he wanted any sort of distinction, let it arise from the perfection of his inward dispositions which no one can see.⁴

Pride (*superbia*, ὑπερηφάνια) is given the last place in the list of vices to combat. But, as Cassian remarks, it holds the

¹ St. Jerome, *Vita S. Pauli eremitae*, 7 (P.L. XXIII, 22).

² Cf. *Vita Antonii*, 49. *Vita Hilarionis*, 30.

³ Gerontius, *Vita Melaniæ* (G. Goyau, *Sainte Mélanie*, p. 116).

⁴ Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.* xi, 18.

first place *origine et tempore*. In fact, it is from this that all the other vices originate.¹

The Eastern monks distinguished pride of two kinds. There is spiritual pride that troubles those who are already advanced in virtue; this is the diabolical pride of Lucifer. The other is that which attacks beginners, those who are still carnal.²

Spiritual pride is, according to Evagrius,³ a sort of "Pelagianism" which makes a soul fail to see the need of grace for the practice of virtue, and attribute to herself all the merit of whatever good she does. The proud man is vexed with his brethren when they do not admit that he can do without God.

This temptation specially assaults the perfect, those who are about to attain the heights of virtue. This is why it comes at the end of the list. It is a poison that is apt to destroy all the virtues. Every other vice besets one particular virtue, that which is its opposite; but pride brings all of them to naught. "Like some cruel tyrant, when it has taken possession of the topmost citadel of the virtues, it overturns it utterly from the foundations upwards."⁴ For since it would rob God of His glory, it dries up the fountain of grace without which no virtue exists. *God giveth His grace to the humble*, but resisteth the proud (1 Pet. v. 5). The Lord has declared Himself to be the enemy of pride.⁵

The monks who allowed themselves to be carried away by this "diabolical" pride were afterwards among those who supported the errors of Pelagius. These corresponded so well with their state of mind. Possibly, too, the proud to whom reference is here made were already avowed Pelagians.⁶

Cassian bids them remember that of his own strength and without the help of grace man cannot advance in virtue nor attain to eternal happiness.⁷ But the abbot of Marseilles, imbued with semi-pelagianism, grants that man has the power to begin to act supernaturally. Of his own resources and without God's help each of us may make an effort to be good, but his efforts will be in vain if they be not brought to fulfilment by divine assistance.⁸

The Catholic doctrine goes farther in support of humility

¹ Cassian, xii, 1, 6. Cf. St. Nilus, *De octo spiritibus*, 17. Hesychius, *De tempore et virtute*, Centuria ii, 100, mentions selfishness (*φιλαυρία*) as the principle of the other vices.

² Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.* xii, 9.

³ *De octo vitiosis cogit*, 9.

⁴ Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.* xii, 3.

⁵ *Id.*, xii, 5.

⁶ See also Chapter VII. When Cassian wrote, the Pelagians were already numerous.

⁷ *De Coenobiorum Inst.* xii, 9, 10.

⁸ *Id.*, xii, 13, 14, 16, 17; *Collatio*, xiii, 11 ff.

and utterly confounds pride. In the order of salvation, without grace we are not only incapable of fully completing virtuous acts, but we cannot begin to do them or even to will them. *For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish* (Phil. ii. 13). *Without Me you can do nothing*, says Jesus (John xv. 5). And the Church has her anathema for him who affirms that "without any previous inspiration of the Holy Spirit and without His aid man can believe, hope, love, or repent as he ought, in order that the grace of justification may be conferred upon him."¹ Where then is there any room for pride? *What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?* (1 Cor. iv. 7).

Carnal pride (*superbia carnalis*) is the failing of the lukewarm religious who has not fully accepted the renunciation of the monastic life and desires to evade the cross and mortification. He is disobedient, moody, and disagreeable with his brethren. He is filled with a bad spirit which makes him critical as to everything. His fixed views make him off-handed in keeping the religious exercises. He is headstrong in his opinions and will not accept any other view. Admonitions he takes ill, and they only increase his guilt.² He is insolent in answering back to his superiors. Lastly, being puffed up with pride, he aims at securing a position of authority in which from being a bad subject he becomes a worse master.³

The practice of humility is the antidote to this fatal fault. The humble man esteems himself inferior to others in merit and capacity. He is ready to bear everything from them, following the example of Jesus Christ, who *humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross* (Phil. ii. 8). Meditation on the Last Things will also help one to overcome pride, as well as to conquer all our other vices.⁴

IV.—PRAYER—ITS CONDITIONS—ITS DEGREES OF PERFECTION—EXTRAORDINARY AND SUPERNATURAL FORMS OF PRAYER

THERE is a very close connection between the extirpation of the vices and prayer. Purity of heart and the practice of the other virtues assist prayer; but prayer obtains grace, and thus secures soundness in the virtues. Hence the monk must

¹ Council of Trent, Sess. VI, can. 3. Semi-Pelagianism was very prevalent at the beginning of the fifth century in south-western Gaul, where Cassian lived. As to the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian controversies, see Tixeront, *Histoire des Dogmes*, Vols. II. and III.

² Cf. *Lausiac History*, 25, 26.

³ Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Inst.* xii, 25, 27, 29.

⁴ *Id.*, xii, 32, 33.

be trained to pray and generously make all the sacrifices required for entire success in it.¹

Prayer, to take it in its widest sense, is the uplifting of the soul to God,² an intimate and familiar intercourse with Him.³ In its colloquies with God the soul pays to its Creator its dues of adoration, thanksgiving, and propitiation.

And prayer demands preparation that the soul which desires to converse with the Lord may be able thus to rise heavenwards. To make this ascent to God readily the soul must be buoyant, free from all that might weigh it down, and in a manner like the angels.⁴

Therefore the first condition for prayer will be the mortification of all the passions. The vices and disorders of the flesh, the agitations of concupiscence, so far as they are neither mortified nor destroyed, fetter the soul and make it incapable of ascending to God. A feather easily flies upwards if it is not wet; but as soon as it has a little water on it, it becomes heavy and remains on the ground.⁵ This is why fasting and all that mortifies the passions prepares the soul for prayer. "The prayer of one who fasts," says St. Nilus, "is like a young eagle which flies on high, that of the glutton is heavy and cannot rise above the earth."⁶ He who is the slave of pleasure, who has fallen into the mire of sensualism, cannot raise his eyes to God nor have feelings worthy of Him. Just as a man cannot see his face reflected in ruffled water, so the soul which is not fully purified cannot contemplate God in prayer.⁷

The ascetical writers pile up their similes to indicate the extent of the purification required to prepare the soul for intercourse with God. St. Nilus declares that perfect mortification, a passionless state,⁸ is the true disposition for prayer. The soul is then entirely calm and tranquil. She has built up within the tower of virtue which reaches up to heaven, and by it she can ascend to the Lord and contemplate Him in the most perfect serenity without any interruption.⁹

In addition to this regular preparation, immediately before

¹ Cassian, *Collatio*, ix, 2, 7.

² St. Nilus, *De oratione*, 35: Προσευχή ἐστὶν ἀνάβασις νοῦ πρὸς θεόν: *Oratio est ascensus mentis ad Deum*.

³ *Id.*, 3: Ἡ προσευχή ὁμιλία ἐστὶ νοῦ πρὸς θεόν: *Oratio est colloquium intellectus cum Deo*. Aphraates, *Demonst.* iv, 18: *In oratione cum Deo colloquimur*.

⁴ Cassian, *Collatio*, ix, 6.

⁵ *Id.*, ix, 4. Cf. St. Nilus, *De oratione*, 18, 19, 51.

⁶ *De octo spiritibus malitiae*, 1 (P.G. LXXIX, 1145).

⁷ *Vitae Patrum*, lib. VI, libell. 1, 8, 13.

⁸ Ἐξῆς ἀπαθῆς, *De oratione*, 51. Cf. Macarius the Egyptian, *Homil.* VI, 1-4.

⁹ Cassian, *Collatio*, ix, 3. Cf. Macarius, *Liber de oratione*, 4, 5.

These dispositions are necessary for perfect prayer; but the sinner, whatever be his state, can always pray for his conversion.

praying the soul should become recollected and drive away all cares and all thoughts that might agitate it or turn it away from God. For whatever occupies the mind before praying is apt to return by way of distraction, unless one gets rid of it as soon as one desires to enter into communion with the Lord.¹

Prayer thus prepared for will be pleasing to God. It will also be efficacious. For if our prayers are to be answered they must come from a pure heart full of confidence, perseverance and compunction. They must also be accompanied with alms and the practice of fraternal charity.²

The duty of prayer was fulfilled with great zeal by the monks. In their pious conversations they told one another of what seemed to them to be the best methods of putting their souls in communion with God. Especially did they inquire how it was possible to pray continuously according to the Lord's command (Luke xviii. 1) and the exhortations of St. Paul (1 Thess. v. 17).

The answers to these questions were not always in accord. Some of the religious, influenced by the errors of the Massalians,³ were of opinion, contrary to the monastic traditions, that work should be done away with in order to pray without ceasing. They were called *Euchites* (εὐχῆ, prayer) or *Men of Prayer*. They were severely blamed for giving an erroneous interpretation to the words of Christ and St. Paul.⁴ From the top of Mount Sinai St. Nilus⁵ fulminated against these monks who refused to work and thus perverted the true notion of the monastic life and offended against charity.

Others supposed one must be almost perfect in order to be able to pray without ceasing. When a soul is so far united to God by charity that all its desires and thoughts and words are of God and for God, its life is one continual prayer. It is always attached to God and in relation with Him.⁶ But if such is continual prayer, how is it to become possible for the majority of Christians?

And so it was generally held that work is prayer. Any occupation undertaken through obedience, offered to God and accompanied with short invocations frequently renewed is in itself a prayer. Only by thus sanctifying all one's daily

¹ St. Nilus, *De oratione*, 9, 70, 117. Hesychius, *De temperantia et virtute*, Centuria, 1, 3, 5, 6. Cassian, *Collatio*, ix, 3.

² Cassian, *id.* Cf. Aphraates, *Demonst.* iv, *De oratione*.

³ A religious sect which arose in Mesopotamia and was often condemned by the bishops. It made all religion entirely consist in absolute detachment from the goods of this world and continual prayer. It condemned work and private property.

⁴ *Vitae Patrum*, lib. V, libell. xii, 9.

⁵ *De paupertate*, 21 (P.G. LXXIX, 997).

⁶ Cassian, *Collatio*, x, 7

actions can one pray without ceasing. For it is impossible even for a monk to say prayers uninterruptedly; he must leave off at any rate when he is eating or sleeping. And yet all, even the ordinary faithful, can pray without wearying by addressing short and frequent prayers to God while they are at work.¹

These brief and silent supplications, which according to St. Augustine were called *ejaculatory prayers*, were held in high honour amongst the monks. Their brevity did not weary the mind and gave no opportunity for distractions to diminish their value.² They are the best and only possible form of continual prayer.

Cassian enumerates four degrees of perfection in ordinary prayer, which he very arbitrarily connects with a text (1 Tim. ii. 1) in which St. Paul exhorts that *supplications, prayers, intercessions* and *thanksgivings* be made for all men.³

The *supplications*, which stand for the lowest degree, are the prayers with which God is asked to pardon our sins. This kind of prayer especially befits beginners in the spiritual life who are still swayed by their passions. Those who are making progress in the Christian life and in the practice of virtue address *prayers* to God to obtain the grace of serving Him in truth and with generosity. *Intercessions* are petitions made to God for the salvation of our neighbours. Very fervent Christians who are animated by a great charity are in the habit of praying much for their brethren to assist them in the way of salvation.⁴ Lastly, *thanksgivings* constitute the prayer of the perfect. Souls of great purity and fervour, who have entirely crucified their passions, give thanks to God with transports of unutterable love for the innumerable benefits they have been granted in the past and which are prepared for them in the future.⁵ They belong altogether to God. There is nothing at all in their thoughts or words or desires which does not come from God. Being very closely united to

¹ *Vitae Patrum*, lib. V, libell xii, 9. Cf. Aphraates, *Demonst.*: *Cum Dei voluntatem efficit homo, hoc ipsum orationem esse, rectum esse existimo.*

² St. Augustine, *Ep.* CXXX, 20: *Dicuntur fratres in Ægypto crebras quidem habere orationes, sed eas tamen brevissimas et raptim quodammodo jaculatas, ne illa vigilanter erecta, quae oranti plurimum necessaria est, per productiores moras evanescat atque hebetetur intentio.* Cf. Cassian, *Collatio*, ix, 35, 36.

³ *Collatio*, ix, 9. Aphraates, *Demonst.* iv, 17, distinguishes three kinds of prayer: *Deprecatio* or prayer for the forgiveness of sins; *Confessio* or the giving of thanks; *Laus* or praise offered to God in order to celebrate His works.

⁴ Cassian, *Collatio*, ix, 11, 12, 13.

⁵ *Id.*, 14, 15.

the Lord by a charity that nothing can impair, they have God always in their minds and pray without ceasing.¹

The Christian rises by slow degrees to such excellence as this. Meditation on divine truths and prayer, the constituent elements of what the sixteenth century called mental prayer, are the means of attaining this consummation of charity.² This kind of prayer, burning like a flame (*ignita oratio*),³ is so perfect that it must be assigned a place on the verge between the ordinary prayer, which is for all men, and the supernatural mystical states which God grants exceptionally to a few privileged souls.

Sublime and extraordinary prayer, such as the prayer-states of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, and their supernatural manifestations, such as raptures and ecstasies, are frequently to be met with in the lives of the Fathers of the desert.

This indescribable and transcendent prayer, which is the experience of only a few, takes place apart from the senses, without vocal utterance, without the use of tongue or speech. It rises out of the depths of the soul which is rapt in God, insensible to the external world and inundated with the light of heaven. This kind of prayer leaps up directly and ineffably to the Lord. In its rapture the soul addresses God in prayers unutterable, which the Holy Spirit calls forth in it unconsciously with unspeakable groanings.⁴ With regard to this, St. Antony said that prayer was not perfect in which the monk was conscious of its meaning and of what he was saying to God.⁵ In this state the soul expresses to its Creator so many things in so short a time that on coming to itself it could not recount them all to itself in thought and speech.

One of the characteristics of this extraordinary state is a

¹ *Id.*, x, 7. The soul in this stage, like Mary at the feet of Jesus (Luke x), contemplates God continually and the things of God. *Collatio*, 1, 8.

² *Collatio*, ix, 16; x, 14.

³ *Id.*, ix, 15.

⁴ *Collatio*, ix, 25: *Quae (oratio) omnem transcendens humanum sensum, nullo non dicam sono vocis, nec linguae motu, nec ulla verborum pronuntiatione distinguitur, sed quam mens infusione caelestis illius luminis illustrata, non humanis atque angustis designat eloquiis, sed conglobatis sensibus velut de fonte quodam copiosissimo effundit ubertim, atque ineffabiliter eructat ad Dominum, tanta promens in illo brevissimo temporis puncto, quanta nec eloqui facile, nec mens percurrere in semetipsam reversa praevaleat. Cf. ix, 15: Mens quae in illum verum puritatis proficit affectum, atque in eo jam coeperit radicari, solet haec omnia simul pariterque concipiens, atque in modum cujusdam incomprehensibilis ac rapacissimae flammae cuncta pervolvans infatigabiliter ad Deum preces purissimi vigoris effundere, quas ipse spiritus interpellans gemitibus inenarrabilibus, ignorantibus nobis, emittit ad Deum.*

⁵ *Collatio*, ix, 31.

spiritual illumination which rapidly imparts to the soul a very extensive knowledge of the things of God.

Hesychius tries to describe this increasing spiritual illumination, which is proportioned to the soul's detachment from the senses and the closeness of its union with God in prayer. At the beginning of its sanctification the light given to the soul may be compared to that of a lamp which guides it in the ways of goodness and leads it safely through all dangers. Then the light grows greater and brighter. The soul is as completely environed with it as if it were that of the moon at full. Lastly, Jesus Himself, like a radiant sun, appears to the soul in His wonderful perfections inundating it with His heavenly light. Then comes an ineffable contemplation of divine truths.¹

Monks who attained to this height of prayer usually experienced other accessory² phenomena of a supernatural character, the most striking of which was ecstasy. The religious engaged in prayer was suddenly rapt in God and, lost in Him, became insensible to all his surroundings. His body remained immovable in the position it occupied at the beginning of the ecstasy.

"One day a monk of the name of Zachary went to find his abbot and discovered him in ecstasy with his hands outstretched to heaven. Seeing him thus, he closed the door of the cell and went away. He returned at the sixth, and then at the ninth hour, and found him in the same attitude. About the tenth hour he again knocked at the cell door and went in and found the abbot lying down. 'What has happened to you to-day, Father?' he asked. . . . 'I will not leave you until you tell me what you have seen.' The old man replied: 'I was caught up to heaven and beheld the glory of God, and there I stayed until just now, and I have just been sent back to this world.'"³

Blessed Antony was often in ecstasy during the long prayers he made at night. At sunrise they used to hear him cry out with his soul all on fire: "Why dost thou disturb me, O Sun? Why dost thou appear so soon to take me away from the brightness of the true light?"⁴

And there appeared other phenomena which differed from that of ecstasy.

Sometimes there were an unspeakable joy and so intense a spiritual felicity that the monk who was favoured with them could not endure them and uttered cries that were heard in

¹ Hesychius, *De temperantia et virtute*, Centuria ii, 64 (P.G. XCIII, 1532).

² Such phenomena as these do not constitute prayer or mystical contemplation. They are but its outward manifestations.

³ *Vitae Patrum*, lib. V, libell. i, 1. Cf. *Lausiaca History*, 1, 45.

⁴ Cassian, *Collatio*, ix, 21.

the adjoining cells. Sometimes, on the contrary, the soul was suddenly caught by the divine beauty and so paralyzed as to be unable to utter a single cry. It entered into itself and expressed what it owed to God in inaudible groanings. Lastly, at times the heart was filled with such deep feelings of compunction and grief that it was forced to shed tears in floods to abate their violence. This grief and these tears were aroused in the monks by the recollection of their own sins, or by their desire for eternal blessings, or by the fear of hell, or lastly by thinking of the impenitent and hardened multitudes.¹

All these various kinds of extraordinary prayer had one characteristic in common, that of suddenness. During the chanting of a psalm, or a spiritual conference, on the death of some dear one, or while reflecting upon his own lukewarmness or negligence, the monk felt his soul burst into flame, he was inundated with heavenly light, he was filled with compunction, and his prayers, like darts of fire, shot up to God. Meanwhile he sometimes wept copiously.² Thus did God sensibly invade his soul.

V.—THE STRUGGLE WITH EVIL SPIRITS— TEMPTATIONS

EVIL spirits are full of hatred and hostility towards Christians, especially towards the monks and virgins of Jesus Christ.³ Their rage was mainly directed against the first anchorites and coenobites who were the founders of the monastic life. They would have been glad to nip in the bud that form of asceticism which was to become so powerful and fruitful in its influence upon Christendom after the peace of Constantine. And many are the stories of demoniacal visitations in the early monastic biographies. In these we find long descriptions of the behaviour of the evil spirits, and of their various ways of leading the saints into temptation and vexing them, and lastly of the weapons with which they were to be resisted.

St. Antony used to tell his disciples that the demons were not created by God as they are now. They were originally angels. They sinned and were driven out of heaven. We were created to take their place in paradise, and it is envy and

¹ Cassian, *Collatio*, ix, 17-19. Macarius the Egyptian describes similar phenomena, *Homil.* 1, 3 (P.G. XXXIV, 518-529).

² *Collatio*, ix, 26. These mystical phenomena are indeed the same as those described by mystical theologians after the days of St. Teresa. But they were then described much more vaguely.

³ *Vitae Patrum*, lib. I, *Vita Antonii*, 15 (P.L. LXXIII, 137). Cf. St. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, 23. St. Nilus, *Ep.* lib. III, 153 (P.G. LXXIX, 456). Diadochus, *Capita centum de perf. spirit. cap.* 96 ff. (P.G. LXV, 1208 ff.).

jealousy that incite them to tempt us in order to prevent us from fulfilling our destiny.¹

Theirs is a hierarchy in wickedness, some being worse than others. And amongst them each has his own special office and endeavours to propagate some particular vice.² But they rage peculiarly against those who are holiest and who have the most influence; they know that if they can bring about their downfall, many will be led to follow in their steps.³ They do not attack those whom they have captured and who are already in their power.⁴

Evil spirits cannot tempt or molest us without divine permission, as we learn from the Book of Job. And sometimes God gives an evil spirit power over us, either to try us for His own glory or else to make us expiate our sins.⁵

According to St. Antony, evil spirits begin by attacking monks through trying to fill their minds with bad thoughts. If these evil suggestions meet with no success, they change their tactics and try to terrify them by appearing to them in the shapes of women, wild beasts, serpents, monsters or bands of soldiers. If these means fail, they turn into angels of light and imitate Christ's saints in order to dupe the monks. If they are beaten in this too, their last resource is to summon the help of their chief, the prince of all evil.⁶

Ordinary temptations, obsession and illusion; such were the principal kinds of assault which the Fathers of the desert had to endure.

In ordinary temptations, the devil suggests evil thoughts and makes the soul desire to put them into practice. The tempter's suggestions are usually adapted to our habits of thinking and the vice that most strongly besets us. In fact, evil spirits know our dispositions and use them as valuable allies.⁷

Nevertheless, all the inducements to evil that assail the Christian do not necessarily proceed from the tempter; they often arise, especially those that are concerned with impurity,

¹ *Vita Antonii*, 15. St. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, 22. Cassian, *Collatio*, v, iii, 7-10.

² *Vitae Patrum*, i, *Vita Antonii*, 15. Cassian, *Collatio*, 17-19. St. Jerome, *In Ep. ad Eph.* cap. vi.

³ *Vita S. Pachonii*, *Acta SS.* 14 May, p. 300.

⁴ Aphraates, *Demonstratio*, vi, 2 (Graffin, I, 254).

⁵ *Vitae Patrum*, i, *Vita Antonii*, 17. Cassian, *Collatio*, vii, 22, 27, 29. Macarius, *Liber de libertate mentis*, 13 (P.G. XXXIV, 945). Arsenius Eremita, *Ad nomicum tentatorem* (P.G. LXVI, 1621).

⁶ *Vita Antonii*, 15 (P.L. LXXIII, 137). St. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, 23.

⁷ Cassian, *Collatio*, vii, 15. Cf. *Vita Pachonii*, 16; *Vita Antonii*, 4, 5. St. Nilus, *De voluntaria paupertate*, 59; *De malignis cogitationibus*, 1, 2.

from the depraved impulses of fallen humanity. Many monks wrongly supposed that all temptations were due to the wiles of the devil, even if they were simple reactions of the passions or the revival of old and only half-uprooted habits of sensualism. The unclean spirits had not a great deal to do, to take one example, to make an old robber chief who had turned monk, Moses the Ethiopian, feel himself strongly inflamed with the fire of lust, even though his body was subdued by fasting and privation.¹ "The war with impurity is threefold," rightly remarks a solitary of the desert of Scete. "Sometimes, indeed, the flesh assails us, when it is in good health; sometimes the passions working on the imagination; sometimes the devil himself through jealousy."²

St. Nilus clearly sets forth the various phases of ordinary temptations. A dangerous impression is stamped upon the outward senses, for instance, on the sight; a lascivious thought ensues, then an evil delight in the depraved part of the soul, and lastly the consent of the will which makes it a sin. If one would avoid falling, one must crush the temptation in its source by turning one's senses away from what is disturbing,³ and driving out of one's mind and memory all bad or dangerous thoughts.

The devil also strives to hinder monks from prayer by filling their minds with distractions and thoughts that are ungodly and wicked.⁴

In his *Directions for Christian Warfare* Hesychius recommends those who desire to overcome evil thoughts to restrain their imagination. It is through it that Satan tempts us, and without it he could not suggest bad thoughts to us. Hesychius also bids us keep our souls profoundly recollected within, which will "close the door against evil or merely dangerous thoughts." The thought of death should also be a familiar one, and above all should we pray to Jesus Christ often and in all humility.⁵ To fly to Christ is a sovereign remedy, as Hesychius is never weary of telling us. He who invokes Christ and flies to Him in the hour of temptation is like a stag which is hunted and surrounded with a pack of hounds, but has taken refuge in a fortress.⁶ When we are tempted, let us smite our enemy with the weapon of the name of Jesus. The invocation of that powerful name should be our very breath of life.⁷

¹ *Lausiac History*, 19.

² *Id.*, 23.

³ St. Nilus, *De monachorum praestantia*, 3 (P.G. LXXIX, 1064); *De malitiosis cogitationibus*, 1, 2. Cf. Cassian, *Collatio*, xix, 16.

⁴ St. Nilus, *De oratione*, 46, 47, 50. *Vitae Patrum*, lib. V, libell. xii, 2.

⁵ Hesychius, *De temperantia et virtute*, Cent. i, 14-20 (P.G. XCIII, 1485).

⁶ *Id.*, 8.

⁷ *Id.*, Cent. i, 99; Cent. ii, 80.

Evil spirits make the most desperate endeavours to discourage monks at the outset of their profession. St. Antony went through this spiritual crisis which is experienced by almost all the younger religious. He often thought of the goods he had owned while in the world; he sometimes believed that his sister needed him and that he ought to return to his family to take care of her. In his father's house he would again find the comforts of life, amass great wealth, and make a name for himself. And while filling his mind with such thoughts as these, the devil tried to inspire him with a distaste for the new life he had embraced. What difficulties there are in the practice of virtue! What sufferings to be faced a whole life long! And would his health be good enough for the endurance of so many toils?¹

Thus for St. Antony the temptation to abandon his solitude was hard enough. He overcame it by prayer. But the experience he had won enabled him to warn those who were novices against the dreadful assaults of the devil which few escape.

When evil thoughts failed to shake the constancy of the monks, the devil worked physically upon their outward senses. Here we meet with the phenomenon of obsession which was so common in the lives of the Fathers of the desert.

Antony, Hilarion, Pachomius and other holy men were long obsessed by lascivious mental images² and even by voluptuous impressions violently affecting their senses.³ Also the devil tried to terrorize them with startling visions and deafening uproar; he tormented them in thousands of ways, going so far as to smite them heavily in the hope of making them abandon the monastic life.

"How often," said St. Antony to his disciples, "the demons, as threatening as armed soldiers, used to surround me with scorpions and horses and wild beasts and all sorts of serpents, and to invade my dwelling. And I used to answer them by singing: *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God* (Ps. xix. 8). And at once by the mercy of God they were put to flight. Another time they came to me surrounded with dazzling light, saying, 'Antony, we have come to give you our light.' And I, closing my eyes in disdain of the devil's light, began to pray, and immediately the light of the ungodly was put out. A few months later the demons sung before me and discoursed with one another about the Holy

¹ St. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, 4.

² *Vitae Patrum*, I. *Vita Antonii*, 5. St. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, 5. Cf. *Vita Hilarionis*, 7; *Vita Pachomii*, 17, 49; *Acta SS.* 14 May, p. 300.

³ *Vita Antonii*, 4; *Lausiac History*, 23; *Vita Hilarionis*, 5.

Scriptures, and as for me, *I, as a deaf man, heard not* (Ps. xxxvii. 14). One day they shook my dwelling, and I, without being disturbed, went on praying to God. Often they made a tumult about me, and danced and whistled, and I used to sing, and their noise turned to tearful plaints. . . .

"When I was fasting, the devil appeared to me in the form of a monk. He offered me bread and begged me to eat and to take pity upon my poor body. 'You, too, are a man,' he said, 'and are encompassed with man's fragility; leave off work for a while so as not to fall ill.' There and then I saw a yellowish serpent, and took refuge, according to my wont, behind Christ as my rampart. He disappeared like a puff of smoke flying out of the window. Often in the desert the devil would tempt me with the snare of gold, offering it to me either to capture me with the lust of the eyes or to defile my hands. I affirm that I have often been beaten by evil spirits."¹

The wounds received by St. Antony in his fights with the devil were so serious and painful that he would have died of them, he said, unless God, whose providence never leaves those who have confidence in it, had saved his life.² Demons also smote St. Pachomius and so battered him that his body long bore the traces of their blows.³ Moses the Ethiopian baffled all the wiles of the devil. The latter, driven wild at his inability to overcome him, laid in wait for him on the edge of a well to which the monk had to come to draw water. He dealt Moses a blow on the small of the back with a club and left him for dead.⁴

The demons also tormented the monks by shaking their dwellings so much as to destroy them from top to bottom.⁵ Cassian tells us that in some of the monasteries of the East in the early beginnings of monasticism the assaults of evil spirits were so frequent and their fury so great that the religious dared not all go to sleep at the same time. They kept watch in turns, reciting psalms and prayers in order to drive away maleficent spirits.⁶

Ecclesiastical authority has never guaranteed the authenticity of all these diabolical happenings, and we are not forbidden to think that they may have been exaggerated by their reporters. But it would be temerarious and presumptuous to reject them all in their entirety. Almost in our own days the Blessed Vianney had to endure obsessions that were

¹ *Vita Antonii*, 20 (*Vitae Patrum*, lib. I). St. Athanasius, 39, 40.

² *Vita Antonii*, 7 (*Vitae Patrum*, lib. I).

³ *Vita Pachomii*, 17 (*Vitae Patrum*, lib. I). *Acta SS.* p. 300.

⁴ *Lausiac History*, 19.

⁵ *Vita Pachomii*, 17. St. Nilus suffered as much from demons as St. Antony and St. Pachomius, *Epist.* lib. III, 98, 99 (P.G. LXXIX, 429-432).

⁶ *Collatio*, vii, 23.

incontestably demoniacal, such as no serious mind can fail to recognize. By these vexations the devil showed that he wanted to drive the holy Curé away from his parish of Ars, where he was exercising so fruitful a ministry.¹ Is it then surprising that he should have striven in every possible way to hinder men like St. Antony, St. Hilarion and St. Pachomius from originating the monastic life which was to save such a great number of souls from the world?²

Illusions were even more to be dreaded than demoniacal assaults, because of the skill with which they were suggested.

Sometimes the devil made the monks think that, so far as outward penances were concerned they need not keep to established rule and custom, but, out of devotion, undertake supererogatory and indiscreet austerities. Thus he hoped to wear them down by excessive vigils and fasts, and to give them a distaste for the monastic life.³

Sometimes he appeared to the specially famous monks as an angel and, in order to tempt them to pride, praised them for their fervour, wondered at their perseverance, and promised them a high place in heaven.⁴ Or else he simulated Christ to make them worship him.⁵ One day St. Antony saw the devil disguised as a great man of stout and powerful build, who represented himself as being the Power and Providence of God and as having come to offer him his aid.⁶

The chief means of defeating the wiles of the devil and of dispelling suspicious apparitions is to make the sign of the cross. "When demons appear to you in the disguise of angels of God," said St. Antony to his followers, "provide yourselves and protect your houses with the sign of the cross, and they will disappear immediately. Indeed they dread this trophy of the Saviour's victory, and He has despoiled the powers of the air and made them a spectacle for the world to laugh at."⁷

Moreover, one can tell at once whether an apparition is divine or diabolical. When Christ or the angels appear, the first thrill of fear is immediately followed by joy, calmness, and the desire for eternal goods. Diabolical manifestations

¹ J. Vianney, *le Bienheureux Curé d'Ars*, p. 59 ff. Paris, 1906.

² Cassian observes (*Collatio*, vii, 23) that in his times there was no longer any talk as in the early days of monasticism, of the religious being molested by the devil.

³ *Vita Antonii*, 16 (*Vitae Patrum*, I); Cassian, *Collatio*, i, 21.

⁴ *Vita Antonii*, 18 (*Vitae Patrum*, I); *Vita Pachomii*, 17.

⁵ *Lausiac History*, 25; *Vita Antonii*, 20; *Vita Pachomii*, 48. A similar event is related in Sulpicius Severus's Life of St. Martin of Tours, *Vita S. Martini*, 24 (P.L. XX, 174).

⁶ *Vita Antonii*, 20 (*Vitae Patrum*, I).

⁷ *Vita Antonii*, 18; St. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, 35; *Vita Pachomii*, 48; Cassian, *Collatio*, vii, 18, 23.

disturb the soul, on the contrary, and stir it up with all sorts of agitating thoughts.¹

The sign of the cross is not the only way of overcoming the devil. Prayer, meditation,² fasting, and fervent piety and the practice of the Christian virtues are also invariably victorious weapons against him. "My dearly beloved," said St. Antony to his disciples, "a clean life and lively faith are weapons dreaded by the demons. Believe me, for I know it by experience, Satan fears in those who lead good lives vigils, prayers, fasts, gentleness, voluntary poverty, contempt for vainglory, humility, mercy, control of one's temper, and above all a heart filled with the love of Christ."³

Hence Christians must take care not to give place to evil spirits by being slothful in goodness. For our enemies treat us according to our deserts. If they find us slack in virtue, they take advantage of it, and by their molestation they become a chastisement for our sins. If on the contrary we are fervent in the Lord's service, and if we fly to Christ for protection, they will never dare to assault us.⁴ The demons, St. Antony loved to say, have no power over our bodies so long as they do not possess our souls, and before they can capture our souls they must rob them of their good dispositions and drive the spirit of prayer away from them. In fact, they are subdued by holiness.⁵

¹ *Vita Pachomii*, 48; *Vita Antonii*, 20 (*Vitae Patrum*, I); St. Athanasius, 43.

² *Vitae Patrum*, VI, libell. i, 40: One day a monk saw a religious meditating in his cell. A demon came and watched at the door. While the religious was meditating, he could not enter; but as soon as the meditation was over, he went in.

³ *Vita Antonii*, 17 (*Vitae Patrum*, I). St. Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, 30.

⁴ *Vita Antonii*, 20 (*Vitae Patrum*, I). St. Nilus strongly advises those who are tempted by the devil to fly to Christ our Saviour. *Ep. lib. III*, 100 (P.G. LXXIX, 432). Cf. Diadochus, *Capita de perfectione spirituali*, cap. 97 (P.G. LXV, 1209).

⁵ Cassian, *Collatio*, viii, 19; vii, 24. Aphraates, *Demonst.* vi, 2.

CHAPTER VI

MONASTICISM IN THE WEST IN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES¹

I.—THE REVELATION OF EASTERN MONASTICISM TO THE WEST—THE ASCETICAL APOSTOLATE OF ST. JEROME AND ST. AMBROSE.

THE monastic life in the West was not an importation from the East. Long before they had any knowledge of the austerities practised in Egypt and Syria there were, particularly in Rome,² unmarried communities of a sort. The institution of these devout associations was altogether spontaneous. For on taking the veil it had occurred to many of the younger Roman women that perseverance would be an easier matter if they united in living together under the protection of a rule instead of remaining with their families.

Nevertheless, the revelation of the monasticism of the East effected an important revival of asceticism in the West.

St. Athanasius, the historian of St. Antony, was one of the first to make this revelation. Exiled to Trèves, about 335, on account of his vigorous opposition to the Arian heresy, he stayed some time in Rome and was brought into contact with the body of distinguished Christian women who were soon to enter upon the ascetic life on the Aventine. They were Asella, Marcella, Laeta and Paula, whose names were afterwards immortalized by the letters of St. Jerome.

According to Athanasius, these devout Christian women received other persons of eminence from the East, among whom were Paulinus of Antioch and Epiphanius of Salamis, who told them of the marvels of asceticism which they had witnessed.

¹ THE PRINCIPAL AUTHORITIES.—St. Jerome's *Letters* (P.L. XXII); the *Treatises Against Helvidius, Against Jovinian, and Against Vigilantius* (P.L. XXIII). St. Paulinus of Nola, *Letters* (P.L. LXI).

For Gaul: Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Sancti Martini, Epistolae Dialogi* (P.L. XX, 159 ff.). St. Hilary of Arles, *Sermo de vita Sancti Honorati* (P.L. L, 1249 ff.). St. Eucherius, Bishop of Lyons, *De laude eremi* (P.L. L, 701). Cassian, *Collatio xi, praeſulio; De Coenobiorum Institutis* (P.L. XLIX). Sidonius Apollinarius, *Epistolae* (P.L. LVIII).

For Africa: St. Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, IX (P.L. XXXII, 747 ff.). This work gives information as to the monastic life in Milan and Gaul. *Ep. CCXI* (P.L. XXIII, 958-965). *Sermons*, CCCLV, CCCLVI (P.L. XXXVIII, 1568 ff.). *De opere Monachorum* (P.L. XL, 547 ff.).

² Cf. Grisar, *History of Rome and the Popes in the Middle Ages*, Ledos' translation, II, p. 114, Paris, 1905. St. Augustine, *De moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, I, xxxiii, n. 70.

These revelations of the startling austerities practised in the enchanting East made an extraordinary impression upon Rome and the whole of the West, and sometimes led to astonishing conversions.

"One day," writes St. Augustine in his *Confessions*,¹ "we, that is to say, Alypius and myself, received a visit from one of our African compatriots named Pontilian, a soldier of high repute at the court . . . and a true Christian. He began to tell us of Antony, the Egyptian monk, whose name, O God, was then quite famous amongst Thy servants while to us it was so far altogether unknown. . . . We were dumbfounded on hearing all the marvels recounted by so many witnesses, marvels which Thou hadst only lately wrought almost in our own days in the midst of the orthodoxy of the Catholic Church. We were greatly astonished at the scale of these wonders, nor was Pontilian the less so at our not having heard of them. Then he spoke of the great number of the monasteries, of their purity of life, which is as a sweet odour unto Thee, O Lord, and of the supernatural fertility of the deserts, of all of which we were ignorant. . . . Pontilian went on with his narrative and kept talking, and we listened attentively without saying a word."

Short accounts of the most famous monks of the Thebaid and Palestine were soon current amongst those in communion with Rome. Such were the Latin translation of the *Life of St. Antony* by St. Athanasius, and the *Lives of Paul of Thebes, Hilarion, and Malchus* by St. Jerome. The reading of these edifying works inclined many Christians towards asceticism.

Pontitian also told the young Augustine how two emissaries of the Emperor Theodosius found a number of hermits in the neighbourhood of Trèves who had the *Life of St. Antony*.

"One of them began to read it. Immediately he is struck with wonder and his heart begins to burn within him, and as he reads he resolves to give up the world to devote himself to Thy service, O God. . . . Then, being suddenly filled with the love of God and a wholesome confusion, and enraged with himself, he looks at his friend and addresses him thus: 'Tell me, I pray, what do we claim to achieve by our work? What do we propose to do? What is our aim in serving the prince? What other ambition can we have at court than to become the friends of the Emperor? And is not that, too, a perishable thing? Is it not full of danger? And how many are the risks we must incur to attain to a still greater peril? If, on the other hand, I wish to be a friend of God, I become one at once.'"²

¹ Book VIII, 6.

² St. Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, 6.

Immediately their decision was taken. They did not go back to court, but gave up everything and joined the hermits and dwelt with them in the same hut.

These tales of Pontinian strongly stirred the soul of Augustine which had already been deeply touched by grace.

"Then . . . carried away in heart and look, I ask Alypius and cry out: 'What are we waiting for? What is this? Hearest thou not? The ignorant awaken in the joy of heaven; and we with all our learning are so heartless as to wallow in flesh and blood! Are we afraid to follow after them because they have gone before us when we ought to be ashamed of not having the courage to tread in their footsteps?' I am saying I know not what, and my great agitation bore me far away from him, whilst he was struck with astonishment and looked at me without saying anything."¹

Thus began the famous episode which ended in the conversion of Augustine.

After the peace of Constantine, the many pilgrims who went to see the holy places of Palestine did not fail to traverse Egypt and Syria to see the celebrities of the monasteries.

Many of them settled in the East and lived there as monks. One of the most famous was the priest Rufinus of Aquileia († 410), the translator of the very popular *History of the Monks* and the unfortunate defender of the writings of Origen. Rufinus went into retirement on the Mount of Olives, where he had a monastery built which before long gave shelter to a considerable number of monks. His gentle piety won him the confidence of St. Melania the Elder, a distinguished Roman lady who had stripped herself of her property, given up her family, and gone to the East to embrace the monastic life. A few years later her granddaughter, St. Melania the Younger, also left Rome with her husband, Pinian, after distributing their vast wealth to the poor, and both of them lived in poverty amidst the monks of Egypt, Constantinople, and Jerusalem.² At Bethlehem the distinguished Roman lady, Paula, and her daughter Eustochium founded a convent under the direction of St. Jerome, the great apostle of asceticism of the time.

The son of wealthy Christians, born about 342 on the borders of Dalmatia and Pannonia among the somewhat barbarous peoples whose rudeness of manners clung to him,

¹ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, 8.

² The monastic East also threw its fascination over Gaul, whence holy persons set forth for the deserts of Egypt. A bishop of Lyons, St. Just, in the fourth century, after a disappointment left his episcopal see and went to Egypt, where he lived as a monk until the day of his death.

Jerome reached Rome at about eighteen years of age in order to complete his studies. There he became acquainted with the temptations of the world and fell a victim to them. Of this dissolute society, in which so many of the virtues of the young suffered shipwreck, he carried away bitter recollections which found expression in terms of violence and anger and biting satire, whenever he had to speak of the corruption of Rome. After his baptism, which took place in Rome in 366, Jerome gave up everything to follow Christ. He betook himself to the East, and lived as a monk in the desert of Chalcis.

Returning to Rome after 381, at the request of Pope Damasus, he began the work on the Scriptures which made him famous and brought under his influence those devout Roman women who were eager to know the Holy Scriptures more thoroughly and to practise the renunciation of the Gospel. Some of them followed him when Jerome withdrew after the death of Damasus into the solitude of Bethlehem, where he lived to the end of his life.

As soon as he had become a monk Jerome wanted all his friends to take the same step. From the depths of the desert of Chalcis, as afterwards from his cavern at Bethlehem, he flung harsh reproaches upon those who hesitated to make an immediate response to his appeals.

"Unmanly soldier, what are you doing in your father's house?" he wrote to one of them, named Heliodorus. . . . "Why are you a Christian with such a timorous heart? Look at the Apostle Peter quitting his nets; look at the Publican leaving his office for the receipt of custom to become a missionary on the spot. The Son of Man had not where to lay His head, and will you be making use of great doorways and spacious dwellings? If you look for your inheritance in this world, you cannot be the co-heir of Christ. . . . You have promised to be a thorough Christian. . . . But a thorough Christian has nothing but Christ, or if he has anything else he is not perfect. . . . What are you, my brother, doing in the world, you who are greater than the world? . . . Do you dread the poverty of the desert? But Christ says that the poor are blessed. Are you afraid of work? But no athlete wins a prize without toiling hard. Are you thinking of the food you will get here? But if your faith is strong you will not fear being hungry. Are you afraid of bruising your limbs on the bare ground after they have been emaciated by fasting? But the Lord lies down with you on the ground. Do you dread wearing your hair unkempt on your unwashed head? But Christ is your head. Do you shrink from the infinite spaces of the desert? But in your thoughts you will tread the heavens; and whenever you are borne thither in mind you will be no more in the

desert. . . . The day will surely come when this corruptible and mortal flesh will put on incorruption and immortality. '*Blessed is that servant whom, when his lord shall come, he shall find watching*' (Luke xii. 43). On that day when the trumpet shall sound, the nations of the earth shall be smitten with fear, and then you will rejoice!''¹

These diatribes made a considerable impression upon the young Romans and created gaps in patrician families. Jerome also wrote letters to the young maidens and widows of the higher circles of Rome, sometimes in angry mood bidding them to take leave of the suitors introduced to them by their relations, and to live in perfect chastity and consecrate themselves to Christ. "You must boldly make use of your free will," he writes to one of them. "If you are so much afraid when you are in peace, what would you do if you had to face martyrdom? If you cannot endure the looks of your own people, how could you bear up before the tribunals of the persecutors? . . . Enough of all these tarryings. '*Perfect love casteth out fear*' (1 John iv. 18). Take the shield of faith, the armour of justice, the helmet of salvation and onward to the fray. Moreover, the preservation of chastity has a martyrdom of its own. Why are you afraid of your grandmother? Why do you fear your mother? It may be that they will approve of your desire when they know it."''²

The family did not always give in to the wishes of its children. Often it met them with violent opposition, because it desired to ensure the succession of a noble name or the continuance of a great inheritance. Thus freedom of choice was hindered, as had happened in the case of St. John Chrysostom, by feelings of filial affection, but still more by the interests of families and even of society. Did not the State find a strong support in the permanence and solidity of the patrician houses of Rome?³

With his usual impetuosity St. Jerome constituted himself the defender of God's absolute supremacy over the soul. It was not only the right but the duty of children to obey the divine call in spite of their parents, whatever the consequence of their decision to family or society. Let them be firm to the point of ruthlessness so far as the family was concerned, if that was required for the following of their vocation. "Remember," he wrote to a young man who was being held back by his family, "the day of your profession of the

¹ Ep. XIV, ad Heliodorum, 2, 5, 6, 10, 11. Cf. Ep. CXXII ad Rusticum. Ep. LXVI, ad Pammachium, etc.

² Ep. CXXX, ad Demetriadem, De servanda virginitate, 5. Cf. Ep. LIV, ad Furiam, 3, 4; Ep. LXXIX, ad Salvinam; Ep. CVII, ad Laetam; Ep. CXXVII, ad Principiam.

³ Cf. G. Goyau, *Sainte Mélanie*, ch. ii, iii.

Christian faith, when you were buried with Christ in baptism and promised on receiving the sacrament that you would spare neither your mother nor your father if the name of Christ required it. See how the enemy is trying to kill the Christ in your heart! See how the other side is grieved at your reception of the gift of Christ which you were to use in the fight! Even if your grandnephew were clinging to your neck and your mother with her scanty hair and garments rent asunder were to bare the breasts that you had sucked to make you give way, even if your father were to fling himself down upon the threshold to bar your way, trample him beneath your feet, and onward without a tear towards the standard of the cross!"¹

"I, too, know well the impediments that hamper you. I am not a man of iron, nor have I a heart of stone. I am not sprung from the rocks, nor am I a fierce tigress's cub. I have had to face the same searchings of heart."²

We shall see to what an extent such exhortations as these aggravated the society of Rome.

St. Jerome was not satisfied with urging on his correspondents to embrace the monastic life. He also laid down for them the rule they were to follow, when they proposed to themselves, as did Paulinus of Nola and also St. Augustine after his conversion, to live the lives of monks in their own homes.

He who wished to give himself up entirely to Christ, he says, must wear coarse clothing; for this betokens purity of heart. To dress in cheap raiment is to show one's contempt for the world. It is well to abstain from baths that preserve that heat of the body which should be lessened by fasting. Fasts should be in moderation for fear of weakening the digestion and necessitating better fare to the detriment of one's virtue. Food in sober measure is beneficial both to body and soul.³

The monk should be sparing in his visits to his family, where he may meet with strangers to him who may endanger his affections. He should imitate St. John the Baptist who lived in the wilderness though he had saints for his relations. His eyes sought for Christ only and would look upon nothing else (*Vivebat in eremo, et oculis desiderantibus Christum nihil*

¹ Ep. XIV, ad Heliodorum, 2: *Licet sparso crine et scissis vestibus, ubera quibus te nutrierat, mater ostendat, licet in limine pater jaceat, per calcatum perge patrem, siccis oculis ad vexillum crucis evola. Solum pietatis genus est, in hac re esse crudelem.*

² *Id.*, 3.

³ St. Jerome, Ep. CXXV, ad Rusticum monachum, 7. See a similar portrait of the monk in Aphraates, *Demonstratio*, vi (Graffin, I, p. 254 ff.).

aliud dignabatur aspicere).¹ He must also avoid the crowd that throngs the towns. "To me," said St. Jerome, "the town is a prison and the solitude a paradise." (*Mihi oppidum carcer et solitudo paradisus*).²

The religious will always have a book in his hands and his eyes fixed upon it. He will learn the Psalter by heart, for that is the book of monastic prayer *par excellence*. He will pray without ceasing and keep strict watch over his senses lest vain thoughts should invade his mind. He must love the knowledge of the Scriptures and hate the vices of the flesh. Jerome wants the monks under his direction to get a scientific knowledge of the Bible.³ At Bethlehem he had instructed Paula and Eustochium in his works on the Scriptures, and kindled in them a great love of the commentaries on the sacred text.

The monk must also be on his guard against day-dreaming, which is liable to lead to lamentable falls. He must also be always at work, so that the devil may find him ever busy (*Facito aliquid operis ut te semper diabolus inveniat occupatum*). In harmony with the monastic traditions of the East, St. Jerome recommends manual labour.⁴

He also urges beginners in the monastic life to dwell together in community. Like St. Basil, he understood how dangerous to novices solitude might be. The solitary runs the risk of following his own whims, since he has no superior. Solitude also encourages vainglory by fostering the illusion of one's being the only person in the world to fast and do penance. The coenobite, on the other hand, is guided and taught by his superiors and edified by the example of his brethren.⁵ Moreover, superiors must be respected and loved as fathers, and their behests obeyed without criticism.⁶

St. Jerome wished to make the most difficult of ascetical conquests, such as getting married Christians to live a life of continence. A rich Spaniard named Licinius had formed this holy purpose in concert with his wife. "I beg you," wrote St. Jerome in order to confirm him in his plan, "I conjure you with all the love of a father, you who have left Sodom behind you to flee into the mountains; look not back. Take not your hand from the plough nor from the hem of Christ's garment,

¹ St. Jerome, *id.*

² *Id.*, 8.

³ A married woman of the world who wished to live a devout life is advised by St. Jerome to be assiduous in reading the Bible. *Ep.* CXLVIII, *ad Celantiam matronam*, 14.

⁴ *Ep.* CXXV, 11.

⁵ *Id.*, 9, 15, 16.

⁶ *Id.*, 15: *Praepositum monasterii tui timeas ut dominum, diligas ut patrem. Credas tibi salutare quidquid ille praeceperit; nec de majorum sententia iudices, cujus officii est obedire et implere ea quae iussa sunt.*

nor from the locks of his hair wet with the dew of night, once having touched them. Go not down from the summits of virtue to fetch your discarded clothing. Return not from the fields to your home to get anything. You now have your wife with you, who was formerly your companion according to the flesh, but henceforth a companion according to the spirit. From now onwards to you she is a sister. . . . Lately she was your inferior, to-day she is your equal; and under the same yoke as yourself she hastens on to reach the kingdom of heaven."¹

"Our patterns and our masters," St. Jerome used to say, "are a Paul, an Antony . . . a Hilarion, a Macarius."² Christians who are truly worthy of the name should imitate them.

And did not circumstances endow the exhortations of St. Jerome with an unexpected effectiveness? At the very time when he was preaching asceticism the barbarians were hurling themselves upon the Roman empire. What was the use of founding a family when the old world was about to perish? Gaul was already entirely overrun by countless hordes of unheard-of ferocity, and its towns lay devastated. Spain was shuddering. The barrier of the Danube had been broken through, and battles were raging right in the heart of the Roman empire. Rome herself—though it could scarcely be believed—was no longer fighting for glory but for her own safety; Alaric was at the door. And if Rome perished, who could be saved?³

"Is it in such times as these that you desire to get married?" wrote Jerome to a young widow whom he was trying to induce not to marry again. "What sort of husband will you choose? Tell me. A man who will have to flee before the foe or to fight against him? You can imagine the consequences. For your wedding hymn you will have the trumpet of the enemy ringing in your ears, and your marriage festivities will turn to lamentations. What means will you have when you have lost the rent of all your properties and see your children dying of sickness and starvation in the hands of your enemies?"⁴

Melania the Elder offered the same considerations to her granddaughter Melania and her husband Pinian to induce them to take vows of poverty and continence. "My grandchildren, four hundred years ago it was written: The last day is at hand, countless ills are about to befall us. Why, then, find pleasure in cleaving to the vanity of this life? Fear you

¹ *Ep.* LXXI, *ad Lucinium*, 1, 3. *Cf.* *Ep.* LIV, *ad Furiam*, 1, 2; *Ep.* CVII, *ad Lactam*, 13.

² *Ep.* LVIII, *ad Paulinum*, 5.

³ St. Jerome, *Ep.* CXXIII, *ad Ageruchiam*, 16, 17.

⁴ *Id.*, 18.

not lest the day of Anti-Christ overtake you and prevent you from enjoying your riches and the possessions of your ancestors?"¹

With less passion than St. Jerome, but with no less urgency, St. Ambrose encourages the maidens of Milan to take vows of virginity, and he energetically demanded on their behalf freedom to obey the divine call.

At the beginning of his episcopate he addressed his people on the excellence and sanctity of the virgin state in homilies of such captivating eloquence that mothers jealously kept their daughters at home during the time of the sermon for fear they should go to hear the preacher. Writing from Rome, where she had taken the veil at the hands of Pope Liberius,² Marcellina, St. Ambrose's sister, asked her brother to publish the discourses upon virginity of which everyone was talking, so that those who had been unable to hear them might at any rate have the pleasure of reading them. Such was the origin of the treatise *De Virginibus*, which very soon was widely read and was snatched by the parents from the hands of their daughters to keep them from taking the veil.

Ambrose, like St. Jerome in his letters on Virginity, draws his inspiration from the writings formerly addressed by St. Cyprian to the virgins of Carthage. In charming style does he praise virginity, "which has heaven for its motherland and the spotless Son of God for its founder."³ He lays down for them—and at Milan they were still living in their families and not in monasteries⁴—their rule of life. He advises them to be sparing in their visits, to love silence and modesty,⁵ to be temperate in eating and drinking, and to pray unceasingly.⁶ Then for their imitation he puts before them the examples of famous virgins such as St. Agnes,⁷ St. Thecla,⁸ and above all the Blessed Virgin Mary, who in the writings of St. Ambrose is given the place she was afterwards to hold in the extension of asceticism.

"Virgins, let your perfect pattern of virginity be the life

¹ *Lausiac History*, 54.

² The *Gelasian Sacramentary*, gives the prayers recited, no doubt during this period, at the "Consecration of Virgins" and the taking of the veil (P.L. LXXIV, 1152-1156).

³ *De virginibus*, I, 20, 21. Cf. I, 10 to 13. See St. Cyprian, *De habitu virginum*, 3.

⁴ St. Ambrose, *De virginibus*, I, 32.

⁵ *Id.*, III, 9-14. St. Ambrose has a fine description of modesty in his treatise, *De Officiis*, I, xviii to xx. He calls it "the companion and guardian of chastity."

⁶ *Id.*, III, 5, 18-20. St. Ambrose gives similar advice to young widows whom he would persuade not to marry again. *De viduis*, 7-12.

⁷ *Id.*, I, 5-9.

⁸ *Id.*, II, 19-21.

of Mary, wherein as in a mirror shine likeness of chastity and the ideal of goodness. Her you must take as your model. . . .

"The desire for instruction springs in the first place from the fame of the master. But what can be more exalted than the Mother of God? What more glorious than she who was chosen by the divine glory? What more pure than she whose body conceived without corruption? And of her other virtues what am I to say? She was a virgin not only in body, but in soul, for never was her love impaired in its purity by any taint of evil. She was humble of heart, grave in speech, prudent in decision, reserved in conversation, devoted to the study of the Holy Scriptures. . . .

"So perfect was Mary's life as to be of itself a rule of conduct for all. . . . How many and striking are this Virgin's virtues! . . . How great will be the company of virgins whom she will go to meet on the threshold of their heavenly home! How many will be those whom she will embrace and lead to the Lord, saying: Lo! here are they who by their spotless chastity have kept immaculate the virgin bed of my Son their Spouse!"¹

The exhortations were far from fruitless. From Piacenza, Bologna, and even from Mauretania there came virgins to Milan to give themselves to God.² Many young maidens of Milan begged to take the veil, but most of them met with lively opposition in their own homes, and many of them ran the risk of being disinherited if they persisted in their desires. The Bishop of Milan advises them not to let themselves be shaken by these trials. Often the resistance of the parents—and they will always use the same tactics—is only a stratagem. They hope to discourage their children from following their vocation by making them wait for their consent. But when they find that their opposition is useless they end by giving way. In such a case, to be able to overcome one's family is to win a victory over the world. As to an inheritance, there should be no regret at losing it. The riches which the heavenly Bridegroom will hereafter share with virgins will afford a superabundant compensation.³

Then Ambrose addresses the parents and tells them of the honours and gains a virgin obtains for her family. "The merits of virgins," says he, "redeem the sins of their parents. The virgin is a gift from God. She is also a present offered by her father to the Lord. . . . For her mother the virgin is a victim whose daily sacrifice appeases the divine justice." Are not such blessings better than the sacrifices, even than that of being deprived of descendants, which a virgin lays upon her family?⁴ Besides, those who dare to hinder entirely

¹ *De virginibus*, II, 6, 7, 15, 16.

² *Id.*, I, 58, 60, 61.

³ *Id.*, I, 63-65.

⁴ *Id.*

the vocation of their children incur the danger of celestial penalties.¹

— These oburgatory appeals to fathers and mothers gave rise to lively dissatisfaction, and the teaching of Ambrose was criticized.² It is an outrage, they said, to keep so many young girls from marrying, as if marriage were an evil thing! Do you want to extinguish the human race? Young people now no longer dare to ask any girl to marry them for fear of being rejected. Such exhortations as these do harm, and they are also a new thing in the Church. In any case, it is an abuse of the inexperience of the young girls to get them to take the veil while they are still so young.³

The Bishop of Milan felt that it was his duty to justify himself against such charges in two homilies *On Virginity*, which he published in 377, a year after his treatise *On Virgins*. The reply was all the more needed because the attacks came for the most part from ignorant or ill-intentioned hearers of St. Ambrose.⁴ "Many reproach me for my exhortations upon chastity because they find them irksome and disconcerting. They unmask themselves by their complaints."⁵

What right have they to reproach Ambrose for inviting young girls to consecrate their virginity to God? "Are they who are free to choose a spouse to be forbidden to show their preference for God?"⁶

Never has he condemned marriage, as some heretics have done. On the contrary, he has always maintained its lawfulness. But he claims the right of declaring openly that virginity is something higher and more honourable and meritorious.⁷ Also, he desired "to stop young girls who were thinking of marrying and to make them exchange the wedding veil for that of the virgins!"⁸

And let it not be said that the increase in the number of virgins in the world will harm the spread and growth of the human race! For experience shows that "in those places where there are but few virgins vowed to God the population decreases, and that on the contrary it progresses wherever the veneration of virginity is held in honour. . . . Thus virginity is not without its advantages for the world"; it gives the world a lesson in chastity. "Indeed, it is not the fear of man's punishments that guards chastity, but con-

¹ *De virginibus*, I, 32, 33. Cf. *De virginitate*, 38-41.

² *De virginibus*, II, 66, 67.

³ *De virginitate*, 24-26, 38, 39. *De virginibus*, I, 34.

⁴ *Accusati enim sumus, et nisi fallor, accusatores nostri plerique de vobis sunt. Horum ergo affectus redarguere malo quam personas prodere.—De virginitate*, 24.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *De virginitate*, 25, 26.

⁷ *De virginibus*, I, 24-39.

⁸ *De virginitate*, 25.

science is what gives it the mastery and faith it is that keeps it."¹ What, then, is the offence of preaching virginity?

Here, then, are truths which were truly astounding to the society of Rome so recently converted and still thoroughly impregnated with paganism.

Nor were these exhortations to virginity any new thing in the Church. Christ was the first, and after Him the Apostles, to praise the state of those who had received from heaven the gift of perpetual and perfect chastity.²

Lastly, Ambrose is not unaware that prudence is required before virgins who are still young are allowed to take the veil. But investigation less concerns their age than their inward dispositions and force of character. For Christ loves childhood, and would not have children forbidden to come to him.³

Hence Ambrose strongly maintained his freedom to exhort to the practice of virginity young girls who felt that they were called to it. But he knew well that such a vocation is given to a few only. The Bishop of Milan explained in his treatise *De Officiis ministrorum* that all Christians are not meant to live a life of perfect chastity or of voluntary poverty. The duties of Christians, he observes, may be divided into two classes: those that are common and constitute morality, and those that belong to such as desire to be perfect. This distinction is based upon the answer of Jesus to the young man who was rich.⁴ The *De Officiis* treats of the former set of duties. In it St. Ambrose is much more of a moralist than a spiritual writer. His aim is to teach priests in the first place, and then the faithful, how to become just in order to be able to attain perfection.⁵

II.—THE REACTION OF "CHRISTIAN EPICUREANISM"—HELVIDIUS, JOVINIAN, AND VIGILANTIUS

THE treatises of St. Ambrose on Virginity and the *Letters* of St. Jerome had deeply stirred the society of Rome and aroused much discontent. The dissatisfaction was only increased when a number of new and striking conversions followed.

¹ *De virginitate*, 35-37.

² *Id.*, 28, 29.

³ *Id.*, 39-41.

⁴ *De Officiis*, I, xi. In writing this work St. Ambrose followed on the lines of Cicero's *De Officiis*.

⁵ In the first book St. Ambrose lays down what Christian uprightness requires: the duties of the young (I, xvii), of the clergy (I, xx to xxiii), instructions on prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance (I, xxiv ff.). The second book deals with what is good for a Christian, particularly of almsgiving (II, xv ff.). The third describes Christian wisdom which never seeks its own good at the expense of the good of others.

Many strictures were made upon Melania, who belonged to the highest nobility of Rome and, becoming a widow in 372, left her family to visit the monks of Egypt and Palestine, and had settled on the Mount of Olives, living there along with other nuns a life of prayer and mortification. Paula, another distinguished widow, lived at Rome apart from the world, spending her time in prayer and self-discipline. She too was soon with her daughter Eustochium off to Palestine, where she dwelt at Bethlehem near St. Jerome, in order to lead a monastic life and devote herself to the study of the Scriptures. On the Aventine a band of matrons, Asella, Marcella, and Laeta, along with other virgins or widows, despite worldly custom and the strictures of the noble families, gave themselves up to prayer, the practice of asceticism, and the study of Holy Writ.

These, it is true, were all women. The perverse or simply ill-natured thought to take ample revenge upon them by calling them mad and saying that they urgently needed being put under care.¹ They made fun of their religious habit, with which, in their desire to become as fools for Christ's sake, they had replaced their sumptuous matrons' dresses.² The joke was sometimes carried to fearful and detestable lengths, as when they went so far as to set traps to destroy the virtue of the young Roman girls who had renounced the world to give themselves to God.³

But men, too, came to be won over to asceticism. What a scandal there was when a patrician, a senator and former consul, Paulinus, along with his wife Theresa, resolved to live a life of continence and give up everything, wealth, family, and a brilliant position, to retire to Nola, an obscure place, and there to live the life of a monk. "When the nobles hear of this, what will they say?" mischievously asked St. Ambrose,⁴ to whom the event afforded a striking retort to his detractors.

About the same time news came to Rome that in Gaul a friend of Paulinus, Sulpicius Severus, who had a delightful position in the world, was giving himself entirely to God despite the opposition of his father and his friends. About 397 Sulpicius wrote the *Life of St. Martin*, the apostle of Gaul and a famous ascetic. His book was widely read throughout Italy and even in Egypt, and inspired many of the faithful to make the evangelical vows.

What must have been the exasperation of the "crowd of patricians," as St. Jerome called them, which had "barked" so loudly at Paulinus⁵ when it saw right in the city of Rome

¹ St. Jerome, *Ep.* CVIII, *ad Eustochium*, 18.

² St. Jerome, *Ep.* XXIII, *ad Marcellam*, 2, 3.

³ *Id.*, *Ep.* CVII, *ad Laetam*, 5.

⁴ St. Ambrose, *Ep.* LVIII, 3.

Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* I, 2.

the senator Pammachius, Paula's son-in-law, defying all strictures and scorning popular comment, exchanging the senatorial purple for the coarse habit of the monk? In the hospital built by Fabiola, another illustrious convert to asceticism, famous for her penance and charity,¹ Pammachius devoted himself to the sick and ministered to their humblest needs, going barefoot and eating coarse food.² Along with him, giving themselves up to the care of the sick, there were matrons who had been most dainty, and "who could not endure the filth of the streets, who only went out in litters carried by eunuchs, and even the least inequalities in the ground were far more than they could bear. A silk gown was too heavy for them and the sun's heat was a furnace to them,"³ and yet to-day they are dressed in rough clothes soiled with work, and have become strong, trim lamps, light fires, sweep rooms, prepare vegetables and make them into little bundles to put into boiling pots, lay tables, carry in dishes and put the food in them, and finally give themselves up to any kind of work that may be required."⁴

A wild and implacable hatred soon broke out against the instigators of this monastic proselytism. Jerome, the intrepid apostle of asceticism, became its special object while he was at Rome, particularly after the death of his protector Pope Damasus. How had they mocked, and that with much ill-nature, at the letters he had written to some of the young Roman girls, in which, in order to exhort them not to marry, he had depicted for them in far too outspoken terms the disadvantages and miseries of marriage.⁵ Now the nobles of Rome "thundered" against him and spoke of him as a magician and seducer who deserved to be deported.⁶ They hurled the most outrageous calumnies against him, going so far as to incriminate him as to his relations with the devout women whom he had entrapped by satanic wiles, they said, by dragging them off to the cloister.⁷

This hatred included monasticism itself, which was made finally responsible for all such defections from the world. In particular was it blamed for the death of one of Paula's daughters, Blesilla, a poor matron who had allowed herself to be enticed by the monks and killed by fasting!⁸ People asked in anger why they were waiting "to drive the hated race of monks out of the town? Why were they not stoned

¹ St. Jerome, *Ep.* LXIV and LXXVIII, *ad Fabiolam*.

² *Id.*, *Ep.* LXVI, *ad Pammachium*, 13.

³ St. Ambrose speaks in a similar manner of the worldly women of Milan. *De virginibus*, I, 21, 29, 54, 55.

⁴ St. Jerome, *ibid.*

⁵ St. Jerome, *Ep.* CXXX, *ad Demetriadem*, 19; *Ep.* LII, *ad Nepotianum*, 17.

⁶ *Id.*, *Ep.* LIV, *ad Furium*, 2.

⁷ *Id.*, *Ep.* XLV, *ad Asellam*, 1, 2.

⁸ St. Jerome, *Ep.* XXXIX, *ad Paulam*, 5.

to death? Why were they not drowned in the Tiber?"¹ On all sides imprecations broke forth against "the men of darkness, foul beings" who were the death of society, men whom the pagan poet Rutilius Namatianus was soon to lament at having to meet even in the isles of the Mediterranean.²

In this chorus of invective was to be heard the voice of many a bad Christian, *the enemies of the cross of Christ* (Phil. iii. 18) and resolute adversaries of asceticism. "I shall give up my religion," said one of them, "if these retirements into the desert go on increasing!"³

Apostasy is too grave a step. It is better to remain a Christian, and be free to strip one's religion of all asceticism. Cannot Christ be kept without the cross and cannot one get to heaven without penance? Many tried to convince themselves that they could and therefore lived like Ausonius the poet of Bordeaux. God has given us food for our use, they said, why should we fast and go without it? He, too, is the author of marriage; hence the state of the married cannot be inferior to that of the virgin.

Such were the opinions expressed and discussed in the social gatherings of the period. Let a false prophet arise and focus them and make a gospel of them, and his success is sure.

About 384 a layman of Milan, named Helvidius, made the attempt. St. Ambrose had put forward the incomparable virginity of Mary for the imitation of virgins, and the charm of this perfect pattern had drawn many of the faithful to the practice of chastity. The perpetual and entirely heavenly virginity of Mary was an invincible rampart for the protection of asceticism, just as in the controversies concerning the person of Christ her divine maternity was to become the impregnable citadel of orthodoxy. The opponents of Christian renunciation appreciated this.⁴ And thus Helvidius, with the intention of exalting marriage over virginity and of discrediting asceticism and the monastic life, by making a wrong use of a few passages in the Gospels, undertook to prove that Mary, after the virgin-birth of Jesus, had had children by Joseph.⁵

Jerome then happened to be at Rome, where his enjoyment

¹ St. Jerome, *Ep. XXXIX, ad Paulam*, 5.

² Rutilius Namatianus, *De reditu*, lines 439 ff.

³ Puech, *Un réformateur de la société chrétienne au IV^e siècle; S. Jean Chrysostome et les mœurs de son temps*, p. 252. G. Goyau, *Sainte Mélanie*, p. 51.

⁴ St. Ambrose, *De institutione virginis et sanctae Mariae virginitate perpetua*, 35: *Cum omnes ad cultum virginitatis sanctae Mariae advocentur exemplo, fuerunt qui eam negarent virginem perseverasse.*

⁵ St. Ambrose, *id.* St. Augustine, *De haeresibus*, 84.

of the confidence of Pope Damasus kept him. He was asked to reply to Helvidius. He hung back; for Helvidius was an illiterate person who did not deserve the honour of a refutation. But the scandal grew, and the defamer of Mary displayed quite a mania in spreading and upholding his errors. Hence Jerome seized the pen and in a fury of indignation dashed off his book *Against Helvidius, On the Perpetual Virginity of Holy Mary*. In it he demolished one after the other the impious allegations of the innovator and the scriptural proofs upon which he claimed to establish them.

A few years later the opponents of asceticism discovered another and a much more powerful champion of their case in the monk Jovinian.

This man had tried the monastic life but had never caught the spirit of it. He soon threw away the habit to clothe himself in fine linen and silk. He became thoroughly worldly in his ways. He frequented the baths and even the taverns. He and his friends made up for their past penances by spending the day in feasting and giving themselves up, people said, to debauchery.¹ Jovinian greatly pleased the society of Rome by living as they did.

For the use of these classes he started a religion which accorded with its ways and opinions. Going farther than Helvidius, Jovinian dared to strip Mary's child-bearing of its virgin halo,² and thus he was able to depreciate virginity still more thoroughly. For the fundamental principle of Jovinian's religion was that the state of the virgin and the widow was not more meritorious than that of the married.

The other articles of his Credo were calculated to give special satisfaction to those who, though they said nothing about asceticism, still thought the common and ordinary obligations of Christian precepts too heavy a burden. Those of the faithful who have been baptized in good dispositions, said Jovinian, cannot be beaten by the devil and are sure of their salvation. Also, in heaven there will be no difference in reward; all who have kept their baptismal grace will win the same crown. The man who fasts is no more perfect than the man who eats freely and gives thanks to God.³ Thus an Antony after long years of mortification in the desert would get no greater reward at death than the Christian who led an easy life on the banks of the Tiber!

Jovinian founded a religion of pleasure and set the flesh

¹ St. Ambrose, *Ep.* XLII, *ad Syriacum*, 9. St. Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I, 40.

² St. Ambrose, *id.*, 4. St. Augustine, *De haeresibus*, 82. Jovinian taught that *Deiparam virginem Jesu matrem non in concipiendo quidem, sed in pariendo fuisse corruptam*.

³ St. Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I, 3. St. Augustine, *id.*

free from the restrictions which Christ had laid upon it. St. Jerome quite rightly called him "the Christian Epicurus"¹ who thought he had discovered the secret of remaining a disciple of Jesus while following the inclinations of nature.

This comfortable kind of preaching met with an enthusiastic reception amongst the Roman worldlings, who could now live as pagans without any fear of eternal punishment. Indeed, Jovinian's influence continued to increase and made inroads even in the ranks of the fervent. St. Augustine tells us of many Roman virgins, now no longer young, and who had so far spent a life above reproach in the cloister, who got married. A large number of the faithful went so far as to look upon celibacy with contempt.² To put a stop to the evil became urgently necessary. Pammachius and other zealous Roman Christians called upon Pope Siricius to condemn "the abominable writings" of Jovinian. The Pope excommunicated Jovinian and his followers and compelled them to leave Rome. At the request of Siricius, St. Ambrose, along with the bishops of his province assembled in synod, anathematized them about 389.³

Ambrose had been the saddened spectator of this mental agitation and spiritual effervescence on the question of asceticism. He had kept silence, and would have wished to go on keeping it and not to speak at all of these "fearful blasphemies." But the erroneous teaching was making a great deal of noise and resulting in defections. Two monks of Milan, Sarmatio and Barbatian, had become apostates in order to follow Jovinian.⁴ And even a bishop, Bonosus of Sardica, had allowed himself to be enticed and no longer believed in the perpetual virginity of the Mother of Jesus. At the taking of the veil St. Ambrose preached a homily, which he published in 392, to brand those who dared to touch with sacrilegious hand the virgin crown which adorned Mary's brow.⁵ Not only did the Mother of Christ remain a virgin after bringing forth her divine Son into the world, as the universal tradition of the Church and the unanimous faith of believers vie with one another in demonstrating, but her immaculate virginity suffered no taint in her child-bearing. The Infant-God came forth from His mother's womb in a miraculous way, just as afterwards the risen Christ came forth from the tomb that was still sealed and entered into the Cenacle with the doors still shut to show Himself to the

¹ *Adversus Jovinianum*, I, 1: *Epicurus christianorum*.

² St. Augustine, *Retractationum*, ii, 22; *De haeresibus*, 82. St. Augustine wrote his treatise *De bono conjugali* to refute Jovinian's errors and to show the superiority of virginity to marriage.

³ St. Ambrose, *Ep.* XLII, *ad Syriacum*.

⁴ *Id.*, *Ep.* LXIV, *ad Vercell. Eccl.*, 7-9.

⁵ *De institutione virginis et sanctae Mariae virginitate perpetua*,

Apostles. Mary's womb is the "shut gate" of which says the prophet Ezechiel:¹ *This gate shall be shut. It shall not be opened and no man shall pass through it: because the Lord God of Israel hath entered in by it.*²

In the meantime St. Jerome, warned by his friend Pammachius of what was taking place, also made himself heard by crying out from the depths of his cave in Bethlehem. No one knew better than he that Jovinian's success depended less upon the value of what he wrote than upon the evil inclinations of the society of Rome. And in order to hasten on the overthrow of the innovator's notions he blended with his theological proofs satire at the expense of the manners of Rome. How sarcastically does he speak of the Romans and their semi-pagan ways who had enrolled themselves as the followers of an unfrocked monk because he had known how to flatter their unwholesome longings!

"Your army is strong in the number of its reserves," he said to Jovinian . . . "fine stout fellows, well groomed and resplendent, who hail you with acclamation and are ready to fight for you with fist and foot! The nobles make way for you in the street, and the rich fondle and take you to their hearts. Just think of it! If you had never been born, the drinkers and the gluttons would never find their way into paradise. Take heart! Be bold in evil! You have among your supporters even bare-necked Amazons who incite to sin all who come near them."³

This reaction against asceticism, with Jovinian for its hero, had as a result, about 405, an effort to rebel against the celibacy of the clergy.

Quite early celibacy had become obligatory for ecclesiastics of the higher orders of the diaconate, the priesthood, and the episcopate, owing to the moral pressure of the ascetics of both sexes. The state of continence was the highest, and many ordinary Christians chose it, and hence it was fitting that it should be the state of the ministers of the Church. Moreover, the latter were often taken from amongst the continent.

However, celibacy was not obligatory during the first three centuries. There was a fairly common custom for the clergy who had once taken the higher orders not to marry afterwards, but they were allowed to live a married life, if they had been married prior to their ordination.⁴

¹ Ezechiel, xliv, 2.

² *De institutione virginibus*, 52.

³ St. Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, II, 37. St. Jerome argued so forcibly against Jovinian that we may think that he disparaged matrimony. He had to write to Pammachius (*Ep.* XLVIII) to clear up his position on the matter.

⁴ St. Ambrose makes mention of this custom, *De Officiis*, I, cap. i, No. 257.

At the beginning of the fourth century the rule came to be more established. In the East the old custom was retained, except that celibacy became obligatory in the case of bishops. In the West, on the contrary, it was not only imposed upon bishops, but even upon priests and deacons, and later on even upon subdeacons. Those who had married prior to their ordination had to leave their wives upon taking orders. This discipline was begun in Spain by the Council of Elvira about 300, but it gradually became general after the most persistent efforts.

And Spain is just where Vigilantius, a priest of Barcelona, undertook his campaign against the celibacy of the clergy. He made it his mission to attack the worship and discipline of the Church on various points. Especially did he find fault with the veneration of the martyrs' relics, the keeping of vigils, the making of collections, fasts, voluntary poverty, and the monastic life.¹

With regard to celibacy, contrary to the customs which were gaining ground, he wanted the clergy never to be taken from among the continent, and even to compel those who were unmarried to have wives. According to him, and in this he was like the libertines of all the ages who measure men by their own rule and believed that chastity was impossible, celibacy was but a cloak to conceal all sorts of disgracefulness. And he went so far as to brand the doctrine that counselled continence a heresy, for if all were to follow it the world would come to an end. Lastly, Vigilantius impeached monachism, the great inculcator of continence and mortification, as the cause of all the evil. In the guise of a good missionary, he condemned it for decreasing the number of the Church's ministers. If all men were to withdraw to the desert, who would rule the churches and convert sinners? Moreover, to flee into the desert is a piece of cowardice; it is an attempt to escape from the struggle with temptation. Does it not show more courage to stand firm and to resist it face to face?²

Vigilantius made converts, and many parishes adjoining his house were depraved by him. Even bishops took up his views and refused to ordain unmarried deacons.³ He was denounced to Jerome, the solitary of Bethlehem, who in one night with a single effort dashed off a virulent refutation of the innovator's theories.

Vigilantius, by finding fault with celibacy, sets himself in opposition to the churches of the East, of Egypt and of Rome, for they choose their clergy from among the continent and exhort the married clergy to be perfectly chaste. Nothing

¹ St. Jerome, *Against Vigilantius*, 1.

² *Id.*, 1, 2, 15.

³ *Id.*, 3.

but the love of licentiousness leads him on.¹ He also maintains that monks are useless, but he is mistaken. Monks do penance for themselves and others. It is their mission to weep and not to teach; they weep for themselves and for the world.² Hence their social position, few as are the Christians who understand it, is of the highest importance.

In his book against *Vigilantius* St. Jerome also took the opportunity of formulating the great rule to follow in order to overcome temptations against purity. It is by fleeing that one can vanquish concupiscence. To venture to meet this vice by means of frontal attack is to lose half the battle from the start. And great is the rashness of *Vigilantius*, who wants us deliberately to incur the risks of this sort of warfare rather than to flee the occasions for fighting, even though one were to withdraw into the desert to do it.³

God was about to lend visible assistance to the defenders of asceticism and to co-operate with their exhortations with striking lessons of actual occurrences.

On the twentieth of August, 410, Rome was taken by Alaric and utterly laid waste. The senators were massacred by the Goths and the matrons violated. All their possessions, to which they clung so strongly as to persecute those who voluntarily renounced them, were reduced to nothing. How plain was then the vanity of the things of this world, and how fully was Jerome justified as against his detractors! Now everyone is forced to renounce the world, and all men are ruthlessly compelled to accept poverty! In this time of misery, when the sword smites everywhere, one is well off if one is not short of bread, and powerful enough if one is not subjected to slavery.⁴ So great were the world's calamities that it had ceased to be dangerous, and that there was no fear of anyone loving it. So crushed was it by all its disasters "that it had not even the ghost of its seductions left," as St. Augustine said.⁵

The Christian families and religious communities of Rome were not spared. Marcella and her young companion Principia only escaped the violence of the barbarians by taking refuge in the basilica of St. Paul,⁶ a building which was treated with respect by the barbarians along with the basilica of St. Peter. Only those were really saved who had carried their asceticism to the point of flying from Rome into the desert in order to live there as monks.⁷

¹ St. Jerome, *Against Vigilantius*, 2.

² *Id.*, 15.

³ *Id.*, 16.

⁴ St. Jerome, *Ep.* CXXV, *ad Rusticum monachum*, 20.

⁵ *Ep.* CXXII, 1 (P.L. XXXIII, 483).

⁶ St. Jerome, *Ep.* CXXVII, *ad Principiam*, 13.

⁷ Palladius, *Lausiac History*, 54.

III.—MONASTICISM IN GAUL

IN spite of all its efforts, "Christian Epicureanism" had not checked the growth of the monastic life in Italy. Nor was it more successful in other parts of the West, where monks soon became very numerous.

Nevertheless, their manner of life did not exhibit the same characteristics as in the countries of the East. The life of the anchorite, in the strict sense, did not spread much in this part of the world. Neither the climate nor the political conditions were very favourable for this type of asceticism.¹ Most of the monks lived in monasteries. Often they gathered together in small bands, as St. Augustine and his friends at Tagaste, in private houses the owner of which had embraced asceticism, collecting a few followers around him. Lastly, there were those who lived as if they were monks in their own families. From St. Jerome's correspondence we learn that there were many vocations of this kind, not only in Italy, but also in Gaul and Spain.

At Milan, thanks to the eloquent preaching of St. Ambrose, the monastic life was in a flourishing condition. Beyond the walls of the town was a monastery of men which was governed by a priest.² Marcellina, St. Ambrose's sister, left Rome to settle at Milan in order to direct a community of virgins.

Eusebius, Bishop of Vercellae († 370), one of the great opponents of Arianism, gathered together all his clergy in his own house in order to live a common life of prayer and fasting along with them. Thus did he inaugurate the monastic life of the parish clergy, a practice which made its way in Gaul and in Africa.

At Nola in Campania Paulinus collected a few friends about him. They chanted the sacred hymns together at the various hours of the day and night, and fasted and gave themselves up to mortifications. Paulinus, a wealthy senator, had finally found happiness in stripping himself voluntarily of his possessions. "Nothing that I owned when I was called a senator," said he, "can be compared with the goods I enjoy since I have been called a beggar."³

In Gaul the beginnings of monachism are connected with Martin, Bishop of Tours, but St. Athanasius had something

¹ Hermits were to be found in the isles of the Mediterranean. Cf. St. Jerome, *Ep.* III, *ad Rufinum*, 4.

² St. Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, 6. *De moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, xxxiii, 70.

³ *Carmina*, XXI, 458, 459.

to do with it. About 340, while he was in exile at Trèves, the Patriarch of Alexandria made the monks of the East known to the Gallo-Roman churches. No doubt he often conversed with Hilary of Poitiers, who was also going to be exiled for his opposition to Arianism. He may perhaps have seen St. Martin himself. In his intercourse with these holy men there must have been talk of the monastic life of the East and of the help it had rendered to the cause of orthodoxy.

St. Martin had the monastic spirit. When he was twelve years old, says his biographer Sulpicius Severus,¹ and still a simple catechumen, he already cherished the idea of withdrawing into solitude to live the life of a hermit. Compelled by his father, a veteran of the imperial army, to serve as a soldier, he fulfilled his military duties under the Emperor Constantius and under Julian. He aided the unfortunate, fed the poor, gave clothes to those who needed them, and spent all that he possessed without keeping back anything for the morrow.² It was at this time that at Amiens he divided his soldier's cloak to give half of it to a poor fellow shivering with cold.³

In 339, when he was twenty-two, Martin was baptized, and at the end of his time of military service he renounced the profession of arms and betook himself to St. Hilary, who ordained him an exorcist.

Desiring to make his parents abandon paganism, Martin set out for Pannonia, his native land, and had the happiness of winning over his mother to Christ. He returned to Gaul on hearing of Hilary's exile. He stopped at Milan and lived there in solitude until he was driven out by the Arian bishop Maxentius, when he withdrew to an island of the Mediterranean inhabited by recluses.⁴

As soon as Hilary returned from exile Martin repaired to him, and founded the first monastery to arise in Gaul, at Ligugé about five miles from Poitiers. Its organization was very simple. The monks lived in huts or separate cells, each one having his own. They met together for religious exercises in the oratory, which was built in the midst of them. Martin was their ruler, but much more owing to example than to commandment. It was to this monastery that they came to find him in order to promote him to the episcopal throne of Tours.⁵

After becoming a bishop Martin did not cease to be a monk. In his missionary journeys through Gaul, where he banished the last vestiges of paganism, he kept to his strict manner of life. He wore rough clothing, rode on a donkey,

¹ *Vita Sancti Martini*, 2 (P.L. XX, 161).

² *Id.*, 2.

⁴ *Id.*, 4-6.

³ *Id.*, 3.

⁵ *Id.*, 7-9.

slept on the hard ground and denied himself even a bed of straw.¹ He was rigorous in abstinence and fasting, and his vigils were many; he restricted himself to what bare necessity required in the way of food and sleep. He was continually in prayer, for even while he was at work his mind was unceasingly occupied with things divine.²

Wishing to live as a monk as far as possible, St. Martin founded within two miles of Tours the famous monastery of Marmoutier (*Majus monasterium*), where he passed the time he could spare from the fulfilment of his episcopal duties. Marmoutier, says Sulpicius Severus, "was so solitary and isolated a spot that it was no better than a desert. It was a plain shut in on one side by the rocky escarpment of a high mountain and on the other by the windings of the Loire. It was unapproachable except by a single very narrow footpath."³

The monks, to the number of eighty, dwelt like those of Ligugé in separate huts. This arrangement resembled in some respects that of the hermits of the wilderness of Nitria. But they lived in community; all the religious were under the same rule, which was taken from that of the monasteries of Egypt and yet was not a servile imitation of it. "No one had anything belonging to himself," relates Sulpicius Severus, "but all that the religious possessed was held in common. They were forbidden to buy or sell anything whatever, contrary to the custom of many monasteries (of the East). No art was tolerated, except that of the scribe, which was allotted to the younger monks, while the older ones devoted their time to prayer. The monks rarely left their cells unless it were to go to the oratory. They took their meals together after the hour of the fast. No one took wine unless compelled to do so by sickness. Most of them had garments made of camel's hair. To wear soft raiment would have been regarded as a serious fault. And this was all the more praiseworthy because many of the monks were of noble families and had been brought up to an entirely different kind of life."⁴

Many of them became bishops subsequently, for it was even more common in the West than in the East to choose clergy and bishops from among the monks. From Marmoutier came Corentine, the Bishop of Cornwall, Brice, who succeeded St. Martin in the see of Tours, Maurillius, the Bishop of Angers, Victorius, the Bishop of Mans, and another Martin, Bishop of Lyons. Most of the missionaries who completed the evangelization of Gaul had been trained in the monasteries of the Bishop of Tours.

¹ Cf. Sulpicius Severus, *Ep. I, ad Eusebium*.

² *Vita Sancti Martini*, 26.

³ *Id.*, 10.

⁴ *Id.*, 10.

Ligugé and Marmoutier were also homes of monasticism which overflowed and gave birth to numerous monastic foundations.¹ For the monasticism of Gaul lived to a great extent upon the traditions of St. Martin until the rule of St. Benedict came in.

St. Martin worked many miracles, either in his monasteries or in the places he visited and evangelized. Nor was he spared molestation by the devil; but he overcame it with the sign of the cross and by prayer.² In its extraordinary and wonderful happenings his life resembles that of the most famous monks of the East. Moreover, his influence over the peoples of Gaul surpassed all one can say about it.

Everyone knows the most touching and edifying account of his death given by Sulpicius Severus.³ St. Martin lay upon his death-bed reclining on the ashes and hair-cloth with his hands and eyes raised heavenwards, praying in spirit without ceasing. His followers were weeping and begging him not to leave them, and he, checking his keen desire to go and be with Christ, said to God: "Lord, if I am still indispensable to Thy people, I refuse not the work. Thy will be done!" How incomparable a man is he, fearing neither death nor toil, as ready to die as to go on living in this world a life of self-sacrificing service!

The monastic work of St. Martin seems to have been much more that of an originator than of an organizer. An apostle of consuming zeal, an extraordinary wonder-worker, an ascetic worthy to rank with Antony and Pachomius, it was the vocation of the Bishop of Tours to convert Gaul finally to the Christian faith and to stir up enthusiasm for the monastic life. The fame of his name, and the universality of his cultus in the West are a proof of the greatness of his success. He was the most popular saint of Gaul.

But St. Martin gave to the monasteries which he founded but an imperfect organization. What he wanted was a St. Basil. Admission was made too easy for the monks. Many postulants who had led a somewhat stormy life were received after a rather superficial conversion and an inadequate probation.⁴ Martin in his extreme kindness of heart⁵ always leaned to the side of mercy, either in the case of

¹ St. Romanus, abbot of Blaye, and St. Maximus, abbot of Ile-barbe, near Lyons, were among St. Martin's disciples. Many bands of monks were to be found in the neighbourhood of Vienne in Gaul and in the Jura.

² *Vita Sancti Martini*, 6, 22: *Frequenter autem diabolus, dum mille nocendi artibus sanctum virum conabatur illudere, visibilem se ei formis diversissimis ingerebat . . . adversus quem semper interitus, signo se crucis et orationis auxilio protegebat.*

³ *Ep.* III, *ad Bassulam*.

⁴ *Cf. Vita Sancti Martini*, 22.

⁵ *Id.*, 27.

admission or of the retention of a member of a monastery who was below the standard. And he had the pain of seeing rebellions in his houses, such as that of the monk Britius, who ended by turning out well, but might have ruined the monastery to which this temporarily erratic religious belonged.¹ Sulpicius Severus often in his writings blames the behaviour of monks who had but too little of the monastic spirit.

This imperfection in the organization of the monasteries of St. Martin was one of the causes of the relaxation that followed in after times and prevailed until the Benedictine reformation.

At the beginning of the fifth century in the south-east of Gaul we find two celebrated monasteries with the foundation of which St. Martin appears to have had nothing to do, the monasteries of Lerins and of St. Victor of Marseilles.

The founder of the first was St. Honoratus, who, as Archbishop of Arles, died in 429. Honoratus could reckon consuls among his ancestors.² Following the example of Sulpicius Severus and Paulinus, he gave up his wealth and left his family to devote himself entirely to Christ. With his brother Venantius and a friend he started on a journey in the East which he had to break off.³ On returning to Gaul he settled on the coast of Provence to the south of Cannes and to the west of Antibes in the isle of Lerins, since called the isle of St. Honoratus. It was a fearful solitude infested with snakes, and was soon transformed into a holy retreat to which flocked numbers of the faithful from all quarters in their desire to embrace the monastic life.⁴

The monastery of Lerins, like those of St. Martin, approximated to the Egyptian type in its organization. The religious dwelt in separate cells while following the same exercises.⁵ The East was for Gaul, as for Italy, the model of the monastic life. The rule of St. Pachomius was held in especial esteem. A deacon named Vigilus drew up a résumé of it for the use of the monks of the West, and later on Benedict of Nursia took ideas from it.

Lerins became a nursery for the episcopate. Three archbishops of Arles issued from it: St. Honoratus, the founder of the monastery, St. Hilary, and St. Caesarius. St. Loup,

¹ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogue*, III, 15.

² St. Hilary of Arles, *Sermo de vita Sancti Honorati*, 4 (P.L. L, 1251).

³ *Id.*, 12 ff.

⁴ *Id.*, 15-17.

⁵ St. Eucherius, *De laude eremi*, 42 (P.L. L, 711). Sidonius Apollinarius, *Epistolarum*, lib. ix, 3 (P.L. LVIII, 618). Cassian, *Collatio*, xi, *præfatio*.

Gennadius, *De viris ill.*, 51. See the rule in Migne (P.L. L, 373 ff.).

the Bishop of Troyes, Maximus and Faustus, the Bishops of Riez, a town in the south-east of Gaul, St. Eucherius, the Bishop of Lyons,¹ all had been monks of Lerins. There, too, lived the famous author of the *Admonitions* to heretics, St. Vincent of Lerins.

John Cassian, the founder of the famous abbey of St. Victor of Marseilles, was born in Latin Scythia² in the middle of the fourth century. We do not know what concurrence of circumstances led him while still quite young to the monastery of Bethlehem in which he was brought up. About 390 he visited the monks of Egypt and lived for several years in a monastery of the wilderness of Scete. He carefully noted down what he saw of the progress of the Eastern monasteries and made a collection of the pious conversations he had with the holiest monks. Later on he made use of his notes in the composition of his works of monastic spirituality.

In 403 Cassian betook himself to Constantinople to St. John Chrysostom, who ordained him a deacon and enrolled him among the clergy of his diocese. When the Patriarch of Constantinople was driven into exile Cassian went to Rome bearing with him letters in justification of the proscribed patriarch. In 414 we find Cassian at Marseilles, where he was ordained priest and founded and ruled the monastery of St. Victor.

We are already acquainted with the spiritual teaching of Cassian. It draws its inspiration from the maxims of the monks of the East, and is to be found in his *Monastic Institutions and Conferences*.

The *Monastic Institutions*, dedicated to Castor, Bishop of Apt in Gaul, explain the rules of the monasteries of the East as adapted to the use of those of Gaul. Rather often it is difficult to unravel what is peculiar to the monastic life of the East from what particularly belongs to the monks of Provence. But for the Westerns of those days, as Cassian observes, the ideal would be to follow as far as possible the rules of the East. The only changes that were made in them were such as were necessitated by the roughness of the climate, the differences of manners or the weakness of temperament which could not endure some of the austerities

¹ St. Eucherius came of a senatorial family of Gaul and was himself a senator. He retired with his two sons, Salonius and Veranus, to the isle of Lerins. Then, in order to obtain greater solitude, he settled in the neighbouring island, now called the isle of St. Marguerite. He died bishop of Lyons about 450. We have his two treatises *De laude eremi* and *De contemptu mundi*, in which he splendidly celebrates the monastic life. Note also his beautiful *Homilies*, specially those on the Lyons martyrs, Blandina, Epipodes, and Alexander (P.L. L. 859 ff.).

² Gennadius, *De viris ill.*, cap. lxii. Some think that Cassian came originally from Provence.

of the Egyptian or Syrian¹ ascetics. These changes varied from monastery to monastery. Moreover, at this time no entirely uniform monastic rule is to be found in the West.

In his *Institutions* Cassian speaks of the habits worn by the monks,² of the order of the prayers by day and night, where the diversity of use is proved by the number of Psalms that were sung and by the manner of chanting them. In Gaul each Psalm was ended with the *Gloria Patri*, etc., which was not done in the East.³ Cassian then sets forth the rules of the Egyptian monasteries with regard to the admission and training of novices;⁴ and afterwards he gives many and detailed instructions on the eight principal vices the monk must avoid.⁵

The teaching of the *Conferences* is more elevated. It treats of the various spiritual subjects on which the Eastern monks had conversed with Cassian. They are divided into three series.

The first, dedicated to the two Bishops Leontius of Frejus and Helladius, comprises six conferences given by the monks of Scete on the end of the monastic life and on other questions related thereto.⁶ The conferences of the second series are addressed to Honoratus, Archbishop of Arles, the founder of the monastery of Lerins, and to Eucherius, afterwards Bishop of Lyons. There are seven of them, and they were held in Egypt.⁷ The last seven conferences are intended for four very holy monks who lived in the islands of Hyères, off the coast of Provence. They were also held in Egypt near the mouth of the Nile.⁸

In several of his conferences Cassian falls into errors as to

¹ Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis*, *præfatio*.

² *Id.*, lib. I.

³ *Id.*, lib. II, III.

⁴ *Id.*, lib. IV. See p. 88 ff. above.

⁵ *Id.*, lib. V to XII. See p. 111 ff. above.

⁶ The ten subjects dealt with are: the end of the monastic life; discretion; the threefold renunciation of worldly goods, of ourselves, and of all things for the sake of contemplating God only; the fight between the flesh and the spirit; the eight principal vices; the death of anchorites slain by the Saracens in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria (*cf.* Jerome, *Ep.* CXXVI, *ad Marcellinum*, 2); the mobility of the soul and of the demons who tempt us; principalities and diabolical powers; prayer and the dispositions demanded by it; habitual union with God.

⁷ They deal with perfection; perfect chastity; God's protection and help; the knowledge of things spiritual and of Holy Scripture; divine charismata or extraordinary gifts of healing the sick or driving out demons; friendship; the importance of not making promises lightly.

⁸ They treat of different classes of monks (cenobites, anchorites, *gyrovagi*); the end of the cenobitic and eremitic life; penance; the mitigations of penance in Paschal time; nocturnal illusions; St. Paul's saying: *The good which I will, I do not: but the evil which I will not, that I do*; mortification.

the necessity of divine assistance for the beginning of supernatural works and as to the gratuitousness of grace.¹ Moreover, most of the monasteries in the south-east of Gaul, including that of Lerins, were semi-pelagian and opposed to the teaching of St. Augustine as to the impotence of human nature with regard to goodness.

In the fifth century Gaul produced, further, two ascetical writers worthy of remark, Julian Pomerius and Salvian, a priest of Marseilles.

Julian Pomerius was born in Mauretania and settled at Arles. He became a monk, was raised to the priesthood, and for some time had the honour of being the master of the future archbishop, St. Caesarius.

Julian wrote an interesting treatise *On the Contemplative Life*.² Although the true contemplative life is that of the blessed in heaven, one may nevertheless enjoy somewhat of it on earth by meditating on Holy Scripture and exercising virtue. In this sense the contemplative life is fitted for all, for bishops and pastors with a cure of souls as well as monks. Julian often in his book takes occasion to teach the clergy of that time and to note their defects.

Salvian is a Christian of the stamp of Paulinus of Nola. A highly cultured Gallo-Roman, he began by aiming at a good position in the world. A convert to asceticism, he lived with his wife as if she were a sister, and then, about 430, dwelt in the monastery of Lerins, and finally became a priest of the church of Marseilles.³

He wrote a book entitled *On Divine Government, De Gubernatione Dei*.⁴ In this he faithfully reproduces the impressions made upon his contemporaries by the invasion of the barbarians. In his *City of God* St. Augustine had endeavoured to justify Providence for permitting the Roman Empire to be convulsed. Salvian undertook the same task. The devastations of the barbarians had so unsettled even those who were Christians that many had lost their faith and so far forgot themselves as to say that God has no care for the things of this world. Others affirmed that the action of Providence will only be manifested on the day of judgement for the restoration of violated right. Salvian, too, teaches that all the miseries heaped upon the Roman world are but the just punishment of its corruption and crime. Providence intervenes with its justice to make men expiate all the sins they have committed.

We also possess a treatise by Salvian *Against Avarice*,⁵ in

¹ Specially see *Collatio* xiii.

² P.L. LIX, 415-520.

³ Gennadius, *De viris ill.*, 67.

⁴ P.L. LIII, 25-158.

⁵ Salvian entitled it *Ad Ecclesiam* (P.L. LIII, 173-238).

which he exhorts Christians to present their goods to God by giving them to the Church, the mother of the poor.

In Spain asceticism was somewhat compromised in the fourth century by the exaggerations of the Priscillianists, who condemned marriage and the use of meat. Among them were to be found especially monasteries of women. It was to one of these in Galicia that the virgin Etheria belonged. In the fourth century she visited the East and the holy places, and she has left us an account of her pilgrimage in her *Peregrinatio*.¹

Spain also produced the poet Prudentius, who died soon after the beginning of the fifth century. Prudentius, warned of his end by his grey hair, renounced earthly honours to live in retreat and prayer. He is regarded as the greatest Latin poet of Christian antiquity. He celebrated the martyrs,² and composed sacred odes³ for the various hours of the Christian day, and long did the devotion of the faithful love to recite them.

IV.—THE MONASTIC WORK OF ST. AUGUSTINE IN AFRICA

It was St. Augustine who began the cenobitic life for men in Africa. He himself exercised its virtues from the time of his conversion till the day of his death.

We may remember how the history of St. Antony and the story of the monastic profession of two officers of Theodosius at Trèves ended by making Augustine decide to abandon his irregular life to give himself to God. His conversion was most thorough. Augustine not only proposed to live the life of a Christian, but the life of a monk. He at once gave up his professorship of rhetoric, renounced matrimony, and, after paying a visit to the monasteries of Milan, withdrew into the country to Cassiacum near the town, with his mother Monica, his son Adeodatus, and several of his friends or followers.⁴ The little community—for so might it be called—divided its time between prayer, reading Holy Scripture and lectures on philosophy, a résumé of which was to become the first of the works of the great doctor. The reading of the Psalms made a deep impression upon Augustine. Wonder, waves of enthusiasm and joy, awe and contrition at the recollection of his sins, confidence in the mercy of God, these

¹ Geyer, *Itinera hierosolymitana*, Vienne, 1898.

² The *Peristephanon* (P.L. LX, 277-594).

³ *Cathemerinon* (P.L. LIX, 776-914).

⁴ *Confessions*, IX, 4, 5. Possidius, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 2.

flooded his soul one after another as he meditated on the inspired singers' words.¹

After his baptism and the death of his mother, Augustine betook himself to Rome, where he was edified by the examples of devotion and mortification to be found in the monasteries of men and women which flourished there.²

As soon as he had returned to Africa he ordered his father's house at Tagaste on the lines of a convent, where he prayed, fasted, and studied the Scriptures and the things of God along with Alypius, Erodian, and other friends. Augustine sold all that remained of his possessions, and distributed the proceeds to the poor according to the evangelical counsel.³

When he had been ordained priest at Hippo, about 391, his first care was to found there a monastery of men which he directed himself.⁴ From Hippo the monastic life soon spread, and monastic foundations sprang up in many of the churches of Africa.

Lastly, becoming a bishop in 396, Augustine made his clergy, priests, deacons, and sub-deacons live in community with himself. In two sermons addressed to the faithful⁵ he has himself described the kind of life led by this community which dwelt in his episcopal residence.

As under the pious communism of the early Christians of Jerusalem, a communism which wholly inspired the Augustinian conception of the monastery, none of the clergy of the Bishop of Hippo was allowed to possess anything of his own. Everything was held in common, even the clothes they wore. Thus they had to practise strict poverty, and any failure of the clergy in respect of this evangelical virtue was specially grievous to the heart of Augustine.

At table, temperance and charity of speech were particularly prescribed. To do away with all ill-natured suspicions, no woman dwelt with the community, not even Augustine's own sister.⁶

The monks of the household of the Bishop of Hippo were soon celebrated for their regularity and fervour, and several of them were chosen to be bishops of neighbouring churches.

According to St. Augustine, the monastic life essentially consists in the practice of poverty, obedience, and perfect chastity. Whoever becomes a monk undertakes and makes a vow to renounce matrimony and to submit to a superior and to live in poverty.⁷ To break this pledge is to commit perjury. Such is the basis of the religious life.

¹ *Confessions*, ix, 4, 5.

² *De moribus Eccl. Cath.*, I, cap. xxxiii, 70.

³ Possidius, 3. St. Augustine, *Ep.* CLVII, 39. ⁴ Possidius, 5.

⁵ *Sermo* CCCLV, CCCLVI. ⁶ Possidius, 22, 26.

⁷ Cf. *Sermo* CXXXII, 3; *De sancta virginitate*, 8, 11.

But there may be a certain amount of variety in the ways in which obligations are undertaken in different monasteries.

In Africa, just as in Italy and Gaul, monasteries did not, indeed, follow the same rule, and custom varied from house to house. This want of uniformity sometimes gave rise to unfortunate disputes, as that which broke out about the year 400 between the religious of the monasteries of Carthage on the subject of manual labour. Some devoted themselves to work and thus earned what they needed to live on. Others, on the contrary, maintained that monks, because they are continually praying, chanting Psalms, and meditating on the word of God, ought to depend solely upon the charity of the faithful for their living. Had not God promised to give what was needful to His servants, as He gives it to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field?¹

Who could decide the controversy with greater authority than Augustine, the founder of the first monasteries for men in Africa? At the request of the Bishop of Carthage he composed a treatise *On the Work of the Monks*, in which he censures those mistaken religious, of whom there were too many in the East, who refuse work in order to wander about, gossip, and abuse the charity of the faithful.²

Augustine's authority in monastic legislation further increased when somewhat later in 423 he was called upon to pacify a community of nuns in Hippo who had risen against their superior. In a letter of severe rebuke which he wrote to them he laid down the orders they were to follow, and from which in after ages was to be drawn the famous Rule of St. Augustine.³

The monastery in question was governed by a superior, who was herself subject to a priest, who was responsible for all the interests of the community and reinforced, when necessary, the authority of the superior.

Augustine orders the nuns all to live in the same house in community and in perfect concord. They were to possess nothing of their own, but each was to get food and clothing from the superior according to her needs. Those who had any personal effects might not keep them, but gave them up to the monastery. But the nuns who came from poor families and had brought nothing into the community received what was necessary just the same as the rest. If they were thus raised to a higher condition than they had had in the world, they were not to be proud of it. Nor should those who had endowed the monastery with their possessions presume on that account. What would be the use of becoming poor if one were puffed up with vanity?

¹ St. Augustine, *De opere monachorum*, I, 2, 20.

² *Id.*, 25 ff.

³ *Ep.* CCXI. The Rule of St. Augustine, as used in many modern communities, was of course drawn up much later on.

The nuns were bound to pray at regular hours. Their oratory was to be set apart entirely for prayer, so that those who wanted to resort to it to pray at other times than those officially drawn up might not be hindered. In prayer and in the recitation of the Psalms and hymns, the mind should think of what the lips utter. In the Office some parts are to be sung and some not; what is ordered must be observed.

The flesh is to be kept under by fasting and abstinence as far as health permits. Those nuns who cannot fast are not to eat anything except at meals, unless they are ill. At table, the readings are to be listened to in silence, for not only the mouth is to take food, but the ears, too, are to receive the word of God.

Sisters of a delicate constitution are to have a modified régime; those in good health must not be scandalized thereby; on the contrary, they should be glad to need less because of their greater strength.

The sisters' dress is to be simple and not to be in any way such as to attract attention. Their hair is to be entirely hidden by a veil. Let there be no lack of modesty in their gait, attitudes, or manners, or in their movements. Let their eyes not be fastened upon anyone, and let them not wish for anyone to look at themselves. A bad look is enough to injure chastity. Augustine insists upon prohibiting all ogling, a danger which was particularly to be guarded against in the voluptuous society of Africa. Any nun who indulged in it was to be admonished by her companions and denounced to her superior if she did not mend her ways, and lastly, if she persisted in her ill-behaviour, she was to be expelled from the monastery.

In each house there was to be only one robing-room and one storeroom. No nun should make any dress for herself, but all should work for the community, and the dresses were to be apportioned according to need.

Augustine is less strict than St. Jerome in permitting baths once a month, and oftener if health require.

There must be no disputes between the sisters, or if any arise, they must end quickly, lest anyone should go from anger to hatred, which fills the soul with the spirit of the murderer (1 John iii. 15). Whoever offended a sister was to ask for her forgiveness, and the person who was offended should at once forgive. Whoever refused to forgive must not expect her prayers to be heard. If in giving orders any more anger than is necessary is shown against the guilty, their pardon is not to be asked for, since that would weaken authority, but one should humble oneself in the presence of God. The affection sisters should have towards one another must never partake in any way of the carnal.

The nuns are all to obey their superior as if she were their

mother, giving her the honour that is her due. The priest who has the charge of looking after their interests has a right to even greater obedience and honour.

The superior must not give orders in a dominating spirit, but as if she were fulfilling an office of charity. She should be an example to all her sisters. Let her correct the guilty, console the afflicted, encourage the weak; and let her be patient towards all. Let her rather try to be loved than feared. Let her think of the account she will have to give to God for every one of her nuns. And let the religious obey their mother in their own interest, and in hers too, for the higher the dignity of the position of the superior, the greater is her danger.

CHAPTER VII

INFLUENCE OF PELAGIANISM AND AUGUSTINIANISM ON SPIRITUALITY—PELAGIUS AND ST. AUGUSTINE

WHILE the monastic life was increasing and many of the faithful on all sides were bravely contending with the help of ascetical practices against their lower nature, great controversies arose as to the power of the will when left to its own strength, the need of grace, concupiscence, and the condition of mankind since Adam's fall. It is not to be wondered at that monks, accustomed to making moral effort, were among the first to inquire what were the respective parts of man and God in the victories of the human will over evil. The doctrinal definitions of the Church, which resulted from these disputes, threw a clearer light upon the dogmatic foundations of Christian asceticism, and thus effected a considerable acceleration in the growth of spirituality.

Two conflicting conceptions of the religious constitution of man divided, though unequally, the learned Christians of the West at the beginning of the fifth century: Pelagianism, which exalted man and attributed to him exaggerated power in the pursuit of the good; and Augustinianism, which set limits to the power and moral worth of human nature when unaided by grace.¹ One can anticipate the effects these two conflicting systems were likely to have upon asceticism, and how different would be the spiritual doctrine of Pelagius from that of St. Augustine.

I.—THE PELAGIAN HERESY

THE Pelagian heresy owes a good deal to Stoicism. The austere philosophy of Zeno, and particularly his conception of human nature, had penetrated into certain quarters of Alexandria. According to Clement, as we know, the perfection of the Gnostic consists in the first place in a stoical

¹ This is not the place to set forth fully the dogmas of original sin and grace, nor all the disputes between Pelagius and St. Augustine which arose from them. They will be only referred to so far as the study of the spirituality of Pelagius and Augustine requires. It must be borne in mind that spirituality depends upon dogma, and can only be fully grasped by those whose theological equipment is thorough.

insensibility. Led astray by such teaching, some of the Eastern ascetics maintained that they could so far destroy the very roots of passion as to be unmoved by it. Among them were characters of such extraordinary energy as to be dead to pain, and they thought that in their asceticism they could do anything. The spiritual writers of the fourth and fifth centuries, in speaking of pride, tell us of some monks who claimed to be independent of divine assistance, and that they could do all things involving moral effort by the sole strength of their own wills.¹ These tendencies were in some sort the stepping-stones of Pelagianism.

Pelagius was a monk who was born in the island of Britain. In his youth he travelled, probably in the East, and then, about 400, settled in Rome, where he was taken to be a man of great virtue. He opened up intercourse with the most earnest Christians in the town.² From Rome he went to Africa, and then again to the East.

Everywhere, in pious phraseology with a traditional accent, he scattered his errors. From Palestine, about 414, he wrote to the Roman virgin Demetrias, who had fled with her family to Africa on account of the invasion of Rome by the Goths, the famous letter in which he set forth his view of asceticism.³ It was in Palestine, too, that he met Pinian and Melania the Younger, who were very closely connected with St. Augustine. In an endeavour to disarm the opposition which he was beginning to encounter, Pelagius attempted to win them over to his side, and through them to placate the Bishop of Hippo. But Augustine, seeing through the move of Pelagius, sent his friends his two books *On the Grace of Christ* and *On Original Sin*, in order to show them that under the deceptive appearance of his words lurked the most dangerous of heresies. Moreover, the case had already been decided; Pope Zosimus had just condemned Pelagius in 418.

The aged solitary of Bethlehem, St. Jerome, also wrote against Pelagius. He was the last heretic to be combated by the saint. Jerome had suffered and struggled so hard for the victory of asceticism over the prejudice of the world, and now fought for the last time to defend the true idea of it against the perversions of the Pelagians. And thereupon the ardent apostle of asceticism departed this life in 420.

Pelagius did not want for followers. The most celebrated were the monk Celestius, who made it his particular business

¹ Cf. *Vitae Patrum*, I, *Vita Antonii*, 15. St. Nilus, *Peristeria*, Sec. xii, cap. 4 (P.G. LXXIX, 945).

² St. Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis*, III, 15; *Retractationes*, II, 33.

³ P.L. XXX, 15, or XXXIII, 1099. This letter was written on the occasion of the taking of the veil by Demetrias. St. Jerome also wrote to her for the same event. *Ep.* CXXX.

to deny original sin, and Julian, the Bishop of Eclanum in Apulia, a vigorous dialectician, who was the most powerful defender of the new heresy.

A man of a robust constitution and great austerity, Pelagius was by temperament strongly conscious of man's strength. He maintained¹ that since man is free it is within his power to do good without God's help. To be good, it is enough to will it and take trouble to be it. Our will is all-powerful for good. To appeal to the grace of God in aid of our assumed impotence is an act of cowardice.

If goodness depends entirely on our free will, merit and reward must also be altogether our own work. God has nothing to do with it; in rewarding our works He does not at all reward His own gifts, but our works alone and our own work.

This doctrine, as we see, is inconsistent with the dogma of original sin. Indeed, Pelagius did not admit the transmission of sin as a fault of nature. Nor did he admit a corruption of man's nature. Adam was created by God in the state in which we are born ourselves, with the same concupiscence, subject to sickness and all the miseries of life, and to death. Hence our will was never weakened by a sin committed in the origin of man.

The inevitable consequence of such teaching was a spirituality full of rigorism and pride.

If man's will is all-powerful for good it must be able to avoid all evil and to keep God's commands without fail. Hence man can live without sinning, without even lesser sins. Of course, he is not impeccable in the same way as God, but he has the power, even unaided by grace, to avoid all sin in fact.² Since God commands men not to sin, and He could not command what is impossible, it follows that man has the power never to transgress God's laws. Moreover, many of the leading characters of the Old Testament never

¹ AUTHORITIES.—Quotations from the works of Pelagius made by St. Augustine in his refutations of Pelagianism, in Vol. XLIV of the *Patrologia Latina* of Migne. The celebrated letter of Pelagius to Demetrius. *Libellus fidei ad Innocentium papam* (P.L., XLV or XLVIII). A commentary on St. Paul's Epistles (P.L. XXX). St. Jerome, *Ep. CXXXIII, ad Ctesiphonem*; *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos* (P.L. XXIII, 495 ff.). Marius Mercator, *Communitorium; Liber subnotationum in verba Juliani* (P.L. XLVIII). See Tixeront's account of the Pelagian heresy in his *Histoire des Dogmes*, II. p. 436 ff. Portalié, on St. Augustine in the *Dict. de Théol. Catholique*, I, 2380 ff.

² *Ego dico posse esse hominem sine peccato*, said Pelagius. St. Augustine, *De gestis Pelagii*, 16; St. Jerome, *Ep. CXXXIII*, 3.

sinned, and many philosophers of olden times were good men in their own strength.¹ Could Christians have been below them?

Pelagius applied these principles to the faithful under his direction, and showed severity towards sinners to the point of driving them to despair.

If man's will is so powerful, it must be able to master the passions so far as to get rid of them. Hence the Christian—and upon the cost of doing it depend his avoidance of sin and attainment of perfection—must tear the passions by the root out of his heart and come to be utterly insensible, arrive at *apatheia*, which is free from all disturbance, and become as "insensible as a stone and as impassible as God Himself."² St. Jerome tells us that Evagrius of Pontus wrote a book on the subject, *Περὶ ἀπαθείας* which was meant for monks and widely read in the East, and that it became known in the West through a Latin translation.³

Pelagianism increased man's obligations in proportion to the degree in which it extolled his worth. As soon as we think that we can avoid all sin, we must avoid it, for when perfection is within every man's reach he is bound to practise it. Following the stoics, who did not admit of any differences in good and evil, the Pelagians taught that there was no such thing as trifling sin. All sin was mortal, excluding man from heaven and even from the Church. When the lightest of precepts has been broken we cease to be heirs of eternal happiness; we are no longer even members of the Church of Christ.⁴

The distinction between the commandments and the counsels was thus, as a matter of fact, done away with. In particular was the counsel given by Jesus to the rich to sell what they had and give to the poor regarded by the new teachers as a strict command. The Pelagians taught openly that Christians who possessed riches and did not give them up altogether could not gain any merits and would be shut out from the kingdom of heaven.⁵ One could do nothing towards securing salvation by leaving one's wealth by will to the poor; one must give it away in one's lifetime.⁶ Did not Christ say that no one can be saved by living in wealth?

¹ Pelagius, *Ep. ad Demetriada*, 3, 5-7. Celestius definitely taught thus: *Quoniam et ante adventum Domini fuerint homines impeccabiles, id est, sine peccato*. St. Augustine, *De gestis Pelagii*, c. 21. Marius Mercator, *Comm.* 1.

² St. Jerome, *Ep.* CXXXIII, 3.

³ *Id.* Cf. *Dialog. adversus Pelag.* Prologus.

⁴ St. Augustine, *De gestis Pelagii*, 9, 10; *Ep.* CLXVII.

⁵ Celestius taught thus: *Divites baptizatos, nisi omnibus renuntient, si quid boni visi fuerint facere, non reputari illis, neque regnum Dei posse eos habere*. St. Augustine, *De gestis Pelagii*, 21.

⁶ St. Augustine, *Ep.* CLVII, 23.

(Mark x. 27). And since in the sphere of our salvation we must reckon on our own strength alone, wealth is an absolute bar to our entering into the kingdom of heaven.¹

The exegesis of the heretic is the same through all the ages. It only keeps hold of such passages of Scripture as support its case, and lets go the rest. If Jesus said that salvation is unattainable by those who are immersed in riches, He added that God, with whom all things are possible, can save by His grace those who make a wise use of their wealth. But one must not mention grace to a Pelagian!

The rigorist spirituality of Pelagius, by exaggerating the duties of the Christian and claiming to do without God, not only fostered pride, but subverted the relations between the soul and its Creator and ruined all religion and devotion. It proclaimed, to use the words of Julian of Eclanum, man's entire emancipation so far as God is concerned.²

It is hardly possible to think of having to fly to Christ as one's Redeemer, if there were no fall and if man can live without sinning. Then there must be no more talk of redemption or of expiation.

Prayer is of no use if the Christian is self-sufficing. It is no more an act of humility inspired by the feeling of our dependence on God, nor an act of loving confidence elicited by the sense of need, nor an act of filial abandonment into the hands of our heavenly Father suggested to us by our experience of the divine goodness. It can be nothing more than the proud prayer of the Pharisee displaying his merits before God, and making a cold and formal claim for his reward. Such, indeed, is the prayer that Pelagius recommends to the widow Juliana, the mother of Demetrias, the form of which has been handed down to us by Jerome and Augustine.

"Thou knowest, O Lord, how holy, innocent and pure and free from all dishonesty, injustice and evil are the hands I raise to Thee; how just and pure, and free from all falsehood are the lips with which I pray unto Thee, that Thou mayest hearken favourably unto me."³

By condemning Pelagianism the Church not only saved the truth of Christ as to original sin and the necessity of grace, but also true spirituality as well.

¹ Cf. St. Augustine, *Ep.* CLVII, 23-29.

² St. Augustine, *Contra Julian. Opus imperf.* i, 78.

³ St. Jerome, *Dial. adv. Pelag.* iii, 14. St. Augustine, *De Pelagii*, n. 16.

II.—AUGUSTINIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

THE protagonist of the Church in the Pelagian controversies was St. Augustine.

No sooner had the Bishop of Hippo finished his disputes with the Donatists than he had to enter upon his contest with Pelagius and his followers about 414. During his stay at Carthage in 411 Celestius had spread abroad his errors and his doctrine, which upheld a spirituality that was austere and stimulated personal energy, highly pleased ascetics and won its way with souls. St. Augustine thought it necessary to refute it in his sermons¹ and letters,² and above all in his theological treatises. Then, learning that Pelagius and Celestius had fled to the East and there got absolved from the reproach of heresy at the synod of Diospolis in 415, he summoned two councils in Africa in order to request Pope Innocent to revoke the sentence passed in the East. In 418 the great Council of Carthage, of which Augustine was the soul, condemned the errors of Pelagius, and this condemnation was definitely confirmed by Pope Zosimus.

Even after Rome had spoken the cause was not entirely settled. Disputes went on. Julian of Eclanum in particular was very vexatious with regard to St. Augustine, endeavouring to overthrow his arguments and to show up the fallacies in his reasoning. The holy Doctor let not a single objection of his redoubtable adversary pass unanswered, but wrote against him till death struck the pen from his hand in 430.³

In opposition to Pelagius, according to whom human nature is all-powerful in the sphere of morals and has not been at all lessened in its natural goodness by Adam's fall, Augustine teaches that after the fall man is naught but *infirmity, corruption*,⁴ and *misery*. We shall see what these words mean.

Since the sin of our first parents, and on account of it, man is totally incapable of shunning evil and doing good without

¹ *Sermo* CLXX, CLXXIV, CLXXVI, etc.

² See *Ep.* CLXXVI.

³ St. Augustine was writing a treatise *Contra Julianum* when death overtook him. That is why the treatise was called *Opus imperfectum*.

⁴ This word will be explained later. In his controversies with the Pelagians St. Augustine put forth with regard to certain aspects of original sin and grace exaggerated views which were not subsequently followed by theologians. This does not at all detract from the holy Doctor's merit in having struggled so hard for the triumph of the Catholic faith. See the full exposition of the Augustinian system with regard to original sin and grace in Tixeront, II, 460 ff.; Portalié, p. 2375 ff.

the assistance of grace. He has lost the liberty of moral goodness.¹ Nevertheless, he retains free will. Hence he does not do wrong of necessity, and he can co-operate with the action of grace. For our justification is the work of grace and yet cannot be wrought without the help of our will: *Qui fecit te sine te, non te justificat sine te.*² But apart from grace, man's will has not the power to avoid evil in fact. Before the fall Adam had that power; he lost it by sinning. Hence actually man, if left to his own strength, cannot in fact help sinning.³ Pelagius is mistaken in maintaining that there were persons in the Old Testament who never sinned against God.⁴

However, St. Augustine provides a qualification of this severity. If man when stripped of grace cannot help sinning, it does not follow that his sins must be mortal. Differing from Pelagius, who admitted of no degrees of evil, the Bishop of Hippo clearly lays down the distinction between mortal and venial sins.⁵ Man unassisted by grace often commits mortal sins, and venial sins still more frequently. Even with the help of grace, indeed, all men commit some lesser faults, and not without reason do we ask God to forgive us our sins when we say the Lord's Prayer.⁶ Only Jesus and His Blessed Mother were totally free from sin.⁷

Luther and Jansen exaggerated the doctrine of Augustine and taught that fallen man has totally lost free will and is necessarily bound by evil. Hence the co-operation of man's will in the work of his salvation is impossible: salvation is entirely the work of grace, and man has no practical part in it. This is a doctrine of despair that cheapens man's nature and paralyzes all moral effort.

¹ St. Augustine calls *liberty* the power to do good, and *free will* the power of choice between good and evil. Fallen man, no longer being able to do good without grace, has not freedom in the sense in which St. Augustine uses the word; but yet he keeps free will. Cf. Tixeront, p. 479; Portalé, 2404, 2405.

² *Sermo* CLXX, 13.

³ Theology is not so strict. It teaches that fallen man can, *without grace and by his own strength*, avoid evil to some extent and do acts that are morally good, though unable to bring us to salvation. But without grace we are radically incapable of any supernatural act. St. Augustine's controversies with the Pelagians did not lead him to formulate this doctrine with precision.

⁴ St. Augustine, *Contra duas epistolas Pelagii*, i, 5; iii, 24; *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, ii, 8; *Contra Julianum, Opus imperfectum*, i, 94; iii, 120, etc.

⁵ *De symbolo ad Catechumenos*, vii, 15; *Enchiridion*, lxxi; *Ep.* CLXVII.

⁶ *Contra duas epistolas Pelagii*, iv, 27; *De peccatorum meritis et remiss.* ii, 7, 8, 34; *Ep.* CLVII, 2. The Council of Trent (Sess. VI, Can. 23) laid it down that the just man of himself cannot avoid all venial sins.

⁷ *De natura et gratia*, n. 42.

St. Augustine's theology, strict as it was, teaches nothing of this kind. It does not do away with our confidence, for it helps us to find the grace without which we can do naught in prayer. He who wills to do the will of God obtains through prayer the grace *with which he can do all things*. For he has always the power to pray, and prayer wins for him the power to act. It is chiefly in having recourse to prayer to get grace that man's free will is exercised.¹

To fly to God, such is the way to cure the congenital infirmity with which we suffer ever since the fall of Adam. Our condition of fallen and feeble humanity makes us see how we need God's help every moment and impels us to pray. St. Augustine says to God in his *Confessions*:² "Thou commandest me, O Lord, to be pure; give me what Thou commandest, and then command me as Thou wilt."

This prayer, though in perfect harmony with Augustinian theology, shocked the proud presumption of Pelagius. If God imposes chastity on man, said he, it is because man can keep it of his own strength, otherwise God would be commanding what is impossible. "God commands chastity," replies Augustine, "and He gives chastity. He commands it by His law, and He gives it by His grace; He commands it by the letter and gives it by the Spirit. For the law apart from grace multiplies sins, and the letter without the Spirit killeth" (2 Cor. iii. 6). Hence God commands us so that, trying to fulfil His commandments and weary of our own weakness, we may learn to beg for the help of His grace. And if we do any good He wants us to know how to thank Him who hath helped us. . . . And who dares to say that free will is done away with because he hath received assistance? . . . He of whom the Holy Scriptures (Sap. viii. 21) tell us, who knew that we cannot be pure without a gift that is from God, addressed the Lord to ask Him for this gift. It was, indeed, because he wanted it that he invoked the Lord; and he would not have prayed for it had he not wanted it. But if he had not besought God's help, what strength of will would he have had?"³

St. Augustine thus makes man absolutely dependent upon God: salvation is the work of grace, and grace is won by prayer. We are beggars; we have to be constantly knocking at the gates of heaven to ask for what we need. And our petitions must be addressed to God humbly, because it is humility combined with prayer that obtains divine assistance. The knowledge of the proud, the hearts of the presumptuous on the contrary prevent the work of God's goodness.⁴

The feeling of our impotence for good compels us again to

¹ *Ep.* CLVII, 10.

² X, 29.

³ *Ep.* CLVII, 9, 10. *Cf. De spiritu et littera*, n. 22.

⁴ *Id.*, 5.

fly to Christ. We are weak, and great are our infirmities. Let us then seek our Saviour, Him who has come to heal us and, by healing us, has made us able to do what our weakness could not achieve.¹ One can surmise the position assigned in the spirituality of Augustine to Christ, and to His mediation and work of redemption and sanctification.

In his own experience Augustine found a confirmation of his doctrine as to man's weakness and the necessity of God's help. He had lived long in sin, and he had been rescued from it by the hand of God, which worked upon him with a sort of overpowering strength. He had long groaned over the weakness and hesitation of will which prevented him from deciding to break the bonds that tied him to evil.² Hence he well knew that in order not to sin God must give the will and the power to avoid it. And what humility do we find in St. Augustine's soul, what confidence in prayer, and what deep gratitude for God's goodness and mercy!

"O Lord," he cries after his conversion, "*I am Thy servant and the son of Thy handmaid. Thou hast broken my bonds. I will sacrifice to Thee the sacrifice of praise* (Ps. cxv. 16, 17). *My heart and my tongue shall praise Thee, all my bones shall say: Lord, who is like to Thee?* Thus shall they say, and answer Thou, O Lord, and say to my soul: *I am thy salvation* (Ps. xxxiv. 10, 3). What was I before my conversion, and what was my state? What was there in me that was not evil? If not my deeds, then my words; if not my words, then my will. But Thou, O Lord, in Thy goodness and mercy didst look upon the depths of death wherein I lay, and Thy right hand plucked out by the roots the corruption from my heart. And for me that meant not willing any longer what I used to will before, but to will as Thou willest. But where was my free will during all the time of my wantonness, and from what deeply hidden lurking place did it suddenly come forth to make me bow my head under Thy gentle yoke and my shoulders to bear Thy light burden, O Christ Jesus, my Helper and my Redeemer? How soon did I take pleasure in losing the sweetness of vain entertainments! What I so dreaded to miss I henceforth gave up with joy."³

Man's dependence upon God was set in a new light by St. Augustine in the semi-pelagian controversy that followed upon the polemics against the Pelagians.

The monks of the monastery of Hadrumetum in Africa,

¹ Ep. CXLV, 3.

² Cf. Confessions, VIII, 11: *Dicebam apud me intus: Ecce modo fiat, modo fiat. Et cum verbo jam ibam in placitum. Jam pene faciebam et non faciebam . . . Et item conabar, et paulo minus ibi eram . . . et non ibi eram, nec attingebam, nec tenebam, haesitans mori morti . . .*

³ Confessions, IX, 1.

those of Lerins and Marseilles in Provence, thought that the Bishop of Hippo exaggerated the impotence of the will in the work of salvation and fostered a sort of fatalism and indifference as to goodness.

No doubt they believed, contrary to the teaching of Pelagius and in accordance with the definitions of the Church, that conversion and salvation are impossible apart from grace. But they thought that free will was to some extent the source of conversion, and that the first movement towards God, the desire to believe, should be referred to man. When we go towards God we take the first step, and thus we deserve that God should come towards us and help us to fulfil with His help the work we have begun of ourselves. Thus grace is given according to each man's merits, and it is the man who decides after all whether he will or will not be saved. They thought that the doctrine of salvation thus understood stimulated personal effort and increased strength of will.

St. Augustine wrote several treatises to reply to his opponents.¹ In these he teaches, in accord with the Catholic Church, that all grace is absolutely gratuitous, not only the grace which makes us do good, but also that which makes us begin to do it. For the very first thought of conversion, the least fancy of returning to God, the slightest and earliest yearning to believe, are gratuitous graces that no man can merit. They must be given to him by God of Himself without waiting for man to make himself worthy of them.

No doubt this doctrine is quite right. But it was connected with a too rigid theory of predestination, which the semi-pelagians misused by exaggerating it still further.

Since the fall and because of it, says St. Augustine, the whole race of mankind is condemned to hell by the just judgement of God and as a punishment for original sin. It is a *mass of sin* (*massa peccati*), *worthy of damnation* (*damnabilis*), and *under sentence of damnation* (*damnata*). God in His pure mercy and by a gratuitous election cuts off from this mass of the condemned a few whom He predestinates and to whom He gives the grace of salvation without, however, entirely abandoning the rest.²

Hence it is God who predestines man to salvation

¹ *De gratia et libero arbitrio*; *De correptione et gratia*; *De predestinatione sanctorum*; *De dono perseverantiae*. These treatises were written from 426 to 428.

² *Enchiridion*, cap. xxvii; *Sermo* XXVI, n. 9; *Contra duas ep. Pelagian.* ii, n. 15; *De correptione et gratia*, n. 26; *De predestinatione sanctorum*, n. 16; *Contra Julianum Opus imperfectum*, i, cap. 136. Tixeront, 498 ff. The Church has never approved this doctrine. Many interpreters of the mind of St. Augustine hold that he modified his teaching on predestination in his treatise *De diversis quaest. ad Simplicianum* (P.L. XL, 107-147). Cf. Portalié, 2398 ff. I am describing Augustinian teaching in the sense in which it appears to have been understood by his contemporaries.

gratuitously and purely in mercy; it is not man who predestines himself, as the semi-pelagians maintained. No doubt man's will must co-operate with grace, and this grace is given to all. The hardening of the sinner in evil is due to his bad will, and if God abandons him, that is always consequently upon the prevision of his bad will and by a judgement that is just.¹ But man's will can only co-operate in the work of his salvation if it has been previously stirred up by a prevenient grace of God. The initiative cannot in any way proceed from man's will.

The Augustinian system, perhaps imperfectly understood, appears to have disturbed a great many of his contemporaries. It even tended to introduce into a great many African monasteries a sort of quietism which was exceedingly dangerous to true piety. "Whether one live well or ill, one will be after all just what God foresaw: good if one is predestined, bad if one is not predestined."² Thus was the doctrine of the Bishop of Hippo interpreted.

Some of the monks made this fatalism a reason for neglecting their duties and for abandoning themselves to sloth and idleness. "Why do you preach to us about our duties and exhort us to fulfil them," they asked, "since it is not we who act, but God who worketh in us to will and to do? . . . Let our superiors be satisfied with pointing out our duties to us and then with praying that we may have the grace to fulfil them. . . . But let them not reprove us when we are at fault, since we are such as God has foreseen us to be, and His grace has not been given to us to do better."³ St. Augustine speaks of a monk of Hippo who spoke thus, and he soon left his monastery.⁴

St. Augustine could only reply to the objections of the monks of Hadrumetum by reminding them of the duties of the will in the performance of what is right. If the will is not strong enough to do good, it must pray to obtain strength. The power to pray, when made use of, acquires the power to act.

So they are without excuse who neglect their duties and are impatient of reproof, because they are lacking in grace. If they asked for it, they would get it; but if not, they must be asking amiss.⁵ It is but madness to make the inevitability

¹ In *Joannis Evang.*, tract. LIII, n. 6: *Quare autem non poterant credere (Judæi) si a me quaeratur, cito respondeo: Quia nolebant; malam quippe eorum voluntatem praevidit Deus . . . Sic enim excæcat, sic obdurat Deus, deserendo non adjuvando; quod occulto judicio facere potest, iniquo non potest* (P.L. XXXV, 1776).

² *De dono perseverantiae*, 38.

³ *De correptione et gratia*, 4-10. St. Augustine addressed this treatise to the monks of Hadrumetum to rebuke them for drawing such conclusions as these from his teaching.

⁴ *De dono perseverantiae*, 38.

⁵ *De correptione et gratia*, 4, 5; *De dono perseverantiae*, 39.

of the divine decrees of predestination or the reverse a reason for doing nothing. For we know not God's designs in regard to ourselves—a wholesome ignorance that keeps us fearful and humble. If we were not to make any efforts, then even the predestined would abandon themselves to evil!¹

Those ascetical writers who follow the Bishop of Hippo insist more strongly upon our need of God, without failing to acknowledge our dependence on personal effort. Others, on the contrary, while giving sufficient play to grace in the work of sanctification and salvation, like to bring out the part belonging to the will in acts of virtue. These two tendencies, that which in the doing of good regards the action of God, and that which gives the first place to the action of man, will help us to characterize and classify many of the schools of spirituality in the days to come.

The fall not only weakened man's nature, it also introduced into it a principle of corruption, concupiscence.

This is not simply a consequence of original sin; St. Augustine sees in it the material element of original sin.² The disorderly desire for baser sensual pleasures and chiefly sexual passion, the unruly impulse to satisfy the flesh, this according to Augustinian ideas is what materially constitutes original sin. This rebellious and insubordinate inclination did not exist in our first parents before the fall, nor would it have arisen in us if the fall had not occurred. The generation of children would have taken place without being accompanied by concupiscence.³

The concupiscence of the parents transmits original sin to the child; it operates, indeed, in the act of generation, and thus produces concupiscence in the child and an inherited fault at the same time as it generates life. "He who begets us slays us," says Bossuet, whose notions of the transmission of original sin are the same as those of St. Augustine. We receive at the same time and from the same source both bodily life and spiritual death. The stock of which we are formed, being infected at its source, poisons our soul by its fatal contagion.⁴

Baptism does not destroy concupiscence, though it blots out original sin. How is this? Baptism, replies St. Augustine, allows the continuance of the act or the fact of concupiscence, but it entirely takes away its culpableness.

¹ *De dono perseverantiae*, 40-42.

² The formal element is the moral imputation of this concupiscence to the whole human race which sinned in Adam. Portalíé, 2396.

³ St. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, i, 34; *De peccat. mer. et remis.*, i, 57; ii, 36; *Contra Julian. Opus imperfectum*, i, 47, etc.

⁴ *Sermon sur la conception de la Sainte Vierge*, Leclercq, I, 231. The Augustinian theory as to the nature of original sin and its transmission is no longer now admitted by theologians.

Concupiscence is no longer imputed as sin in the case of the baptized, but the evil of concupiscence nevertheless subsists in them.¹

Thus in fallen man, even in the baptized, there is the evil of concupiscence, which would never have existed if Adam had not disobeyed God. Hence the Pelagians are wrong in saying that concupiscence is good and natural in man, and that it existed in Adam before the fall, and that it would exist in ourselves even if our first parents had not sinned. On the other hand, the Manicheans are in error when they teach that concupiscence is an evil thing introduced into man by the principle of evil, and that thus is explained the antagonism between the flesh and the spirit. Fallen nature remains good, but the prevarication of Adam gave rise in it to a defect or vice (*vitium*) which is concupiscence.²

Thus human nature was considerably lowered. St. Augustine is deeply convinced of this. Concupiscence, he says, is a malady (*morbus*) of our nature, an infirmity (*languor*), a wound (*vulnus*), a virus or contagion, to use the expression of Bossuet (*tubes*); it is a law of disgrace (*lex foeda*) and misery (*misera*).³ The saint had experienced in his youth the tyranny of the passions and the evils wrought in his soul by the ravages of concupiscence. He had painful memories of these things and conceived a rather pessimistic notion of man's fallen nature.⁴

These principles of St. Augustine may lead to a certain degree of rigorism. Later on an entire school of spirituality of Jansenist tendencies came to the conclusion that the sensible in man, since it is more or less connected with concupiscence, was to be condemned. It tended to disapprove in a rather vague manner all manifestations of the senses, and to hold as more or less culpable all pleasures that were not wholly spiritual.⁵

¹ *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, i, 28, 29; *Contra duas epist. Pelag.* i, 27.

² *Contra Julianum Opus imperfectum*, iii, 177: *Dicimus eam (concupiscentiam) esse vitium naturae bonae quod in nostram naturam per praevaricationem primi hominis versum est.* Cf. i, 71.

³ *Sermo* CLI, 8. Bossuet in alluding to concupiscence compares the world to a "great hospital of God's . . . where all are ill." *Méditation sur l'Évangile, La Cène*, 2^e partie, 67^e jour. This Augustinian doctrine, strict as it is, differs essentially from that of Luther, who thought that human nature had been *substantially* vitiated by the fall. Concupiscence, according to St. Augustine, is only an *accidental* disease of man's nature which remains radically good.

⁴ Many expositors of Augustinianism think that the saint modified his ideas as to this at the end of his life. Cf. *Retract.* I, ix, 6.

⁵ Modern theologians teach that original sin consists in being deprived of sanctifying grace, which is the state in which, before his baptism, a child is found to be through the fall. Concupiscence is, in fact, a consequence of the fall. But in itself it is not an evil, but

Let us leave aside all the exaggerations that may have arisen from the teaching of Augustinianism. Nevertheless, it is unfortunately true that concupiscence, whatever idea one may have of it, is an unruly tendency which must be incessantly restrained if one wants to fulfil one's duty. The struggle with fleshly desire, says St. Augustine, must be carried on without truce or suspension. Not to fight is to be beaten, and any peace between the flesh and the spirit would be a wicked peace. The lives of the saints, too, have always been and could not be otherwise than an unceasing warfare.¹ Impassibility, the *apatheia* of the Stoics, is a chimera.²

But the fall has done more than upset man's nature in itself; it has also aggravated the conditions of man's existence by bringing upon the world a flood of evils and miseries, which are the punishment of Adam's sin and are strikingly described by St. Augustine.

"That the whole of the human race," he says, "was condemned from the start, this life, if we may call life what is so full of dreadful ills, sufficiently bears witness. What other meaning, indeed, can be assigned to the deep and fearful ignorance, the source of all our errors, which enfolds in its darkness all the children of Adam from their birth, and from which man can only escape by hard work and suffering and feeling his way? What can account for the love of vanity and evil, whence arise sharp anxieties, passions, regrets, uneasinesses, mad joys, discords, law-suits, wars, treacheries, bad tempers, enmities, deceits, flatteries, frauds, thefts, rapine, perfidy, pride, ambition, envy, murder, parricide, cruelty, inhumanity, wickedness, sensualism . . . and many other ills I cannot think of, and yet are met with in the lives of those in this world. . . ? Why are so many threats used to check our children's faults? Why have we tutors and teachers, why sticks and whips and canes . . . unless it is to overcome our children's ignorance and bridle their passions, evils with which we came into the world? . . . Besides the troubles of the children . . . who could, I will not say utter in speech, but conceive in mind, all the miseries of the human race, miseries which are not the effect of the malice of the wicked, but which simply are due to man's

a danger; it is natural to man made as he is of the flesh and spirit. Had not God raised man to the supernatural state, had He created him in a state of pure nature, as theologians say, He could have created him as he now is—*minus* original sin—and with concupiscence. This theological teaching will enable us to avoid all rigorism in spirituality.

¹ St. Augustine, *Serm.* XXX, 4; *De continentia*, 7.

² *De civitate Dei*, XIV, 4. Cf. St. Leo the Great, *Sermo*, XLI, *De Quadragesima*, iii, 1.

condition here below? What anguish and grief arises from the death of kinsmen and days of mourning, from the losses we meet with and the condemnations, the impostures and deceits of men! . . . What shall we say of the countless accidents to which we are liable and which arise from outside causes: heat, cold, storms, rain, floods, thunder and lightning, hail, thunderbolts, earthquakes? . . . As for the diseases that may arise within us, so numerous are they that medical works do not contain all of them. And as for most, not to say all of them, the care bestowed and the remedies used for curing them are just so many torments, so that a man can only escape from one pain by flying to another. . . . Lastly, even in sleep, which is rightly called rest, who can tell us how often he is disturbed by dreams and alarming imaginary terrors, which impress us so strongly that we cannot tell them from reality, and they fill our poor souls with fright?"¹

How can the Pelagians think that such miseries are natural to man, that they belong to the conditions in which we were originally created, and that they would have existed in all their fulness, even if Adam had not sinned?² They would have us bear the pains of life with stoicism. We, on the other hand, accept them as an expiation of sin. It is, indeed, only right that, since we were driven out of the delights of paradise through an inordinate love of pleasure, we should be restored by bearing our miseries with humility. Patience will recover for us all that sin has riven from us.³

Christian asceticism is thus perfected by accepting the pains of life.

Augustinian anthropology—apart from some exaggerations—clearly determines the conditions of Christian life on earth.

Man can do nothing without grace. Hence he is absolutely dependent upon God, to whom he must pray, and upon Christ

¹ *De civitate Dei*, XXII, 22, 1-3. Cf. *Contra Julianum Opus imperfectum*, i, 50-54; iii, 44; vi, 5. Pascal was entirely of St. Augustine's mind when he wrote: "Apart from this most incomprehensible of all mysteries (*original sin*), we cannot understand ourselves. The crux of our condition assumes all its intricacies in that abyss; so that man is more inconceivable without this mystery than is the mystery itself apart from man" (*Pensées*, art. viii). Many theologians held that we must not, with St. Augustine and Pascal, put forward man's miseries as proving original sin. *In fact* these miseries are a result of the fall. But they are nevertheless natural to man, and if God had created man without raising him to the supernatural state, they would still have existed and would not have been the consequence of a sin.

² *Contra Julianum Opus imperfectum*, vi, 26, 27.

³ St. Augustine, *De patientia*, xiv.

his Saviour, in whom he must trust. Concupiscence sets him in a state of perpetual strife, from which he can only emerge victoriously through mortification. The pains of this life afford him occasions for suffering, expiating and acquiring merits.

St. Augustine follows St. Paul and explains him, and brings to light the firm foundations of ascetical theology. Such spiritual writers as attempt to build upon other foundations only erect fragile structures which cannot last.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF ST. AUGUSTINE—TEMPTATION AND PRAYER

ON these strict principles St. Augustine constructed a work all of love, a glorification of charity. One of the strange contrasts of his richly-dowered mind consists in having given expression with inexorable rigour to the rights of divine justice, while at the same time he succeeds in describing in touching terms the delights of the love of God.

In Christian iconography St. Augustine is represented as holding a heart, to remind us that he is the Doctor of charity. No man has spoken of that virtue better than he. All his writings are perfumed with charity. In reading them, not only are we filled with admiration for his powerful and penetrating mind, we are also charmed with his affectionate heart, and the loving expressions he pours forth when he speaks of God and His works.¹ The holy Doctor is both light and warmth, thought and feeling; nor do we find in him an arid and chilly intellectualism. To study him makes us better, for nowhere else do we find knowledge so completely transformed into love.

This characteristic of St. Augustine's genius shows why his spiritual teaching is reduced in the last resort to charity.

Perfection, as we shall see, consists in charity that has developed to its fullest extent. Progress toward it, which requires the mortification of our desires, the practice of virtue and prayer, is wrought through charity; and lastly, the advance of the soul in perfection is proportionate to the advance of charity within it.

I.—ST. AUGUSTINE AND CHRISTIAN PERFECTION : ITS CENTRE IN CHARITY

CHRISTIAN perfection is perfect justice, and perfect justice is perfect charity : *charitas perfecta, perfecta justitia est.*²

Perfect justice consists in the keeping of God's commandments so strictly that all sin, even the least, is avoided. But it is charity that makes us respect God's commandments. If we love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, we

¹ Cf. Portalier, *Dict. de Théol. Cathol.*, art. sur S. Augustin, p. 2454.

² *De natura et gratia*, lxx, n. 84.

live altogether in goodness, since we love supremely what God orders to the point of never transgressing it.¹

Hence absolute perfection consists in being so far advanced in charity as never to commit any sin. Can such a state be attained?

The Pelagians, as we know, boldly taught that the Christian can and ought to reach this supreme perfection. Many monks of the East endeavoured to realize in themselves such perfection, and they thought that they had succeeded with God's help. St. Augustine was more cautious.

He declares that such a degree of perfection may no doubt be attained, if the question be considered theoretically; but he dares not be too affirmative. As a matter of fact, however, no one has ever reached it except Jesus and His Mother Mary. For to attain to perfection we should have to be cured of our natural weakness, the source of our daily failures: "But we shall never be completely healed until we are made perfect in charity . . . and we shall only be perfected in charity when *we shall see God as He is* (1 John iii. 2). Indeed, nothing can increase our charity when faith is lost in sight."²

In fact, as long as we are on earth there is always room in us for an increase in charity. And undoubtedly if it be not more perfect in each one of us it is through our own fault, and that is why we so often fall into small sins which could be avoided.³ Here below, indeed, we must not hope to calm the flesh so completely as to get rid of all the small temptations to which we sometimes yield.⁴

The perfection, therefore, to which a Christian can attain is only relative. It consists in tending unceasingly and without flagging or desistance towards absolute perfection. This, however, remains an ideal which must be the more indefatigably pursued inasmuch as it is not altogether to be fully attained.⁵ To strive constantly to realize within that full and perfect justice which excludes all sin, however slight, such is the vocation of the fervent Christian. He who develops charity within himself in such a way as habitually to avoid mortal sin and to reduce the number of lighter faults,

¹ Cf. *De peccat. merit. et remiss.*, II, xiii, n. 18-20; *De moribus Eccl. Cathol.*, I, xxv, n. 46; *Ep.* CLXVII, 11. St. Leo the Great calls charity the mother of all virtues (*Sermo XXXVIII*, 4).

² *De perfect. just. hominis*, cap. iii: *Tunc ergo plena erit justitia quando plena sanitas: tunc plena sanitas quando plena charitas . . . tunc autem plena charitas quando videbimus eum sicuti est* (1 John iii, 2). *Neque enim erit quod addatur ad dilectionem cum fides pervenerit ad visionem.*

³ *Sermo CLXVII*, 5.

⁴ *Retrtractat.* I. 19; *De spiritu et littera*, n. 65.

⁵ *De peccat. merit. et remiss.*, II, cap. xv, n. 22; *De perfectione justit. hominis*, cap. xx, xxi; *De natura et gratia*, n. 82.

has entered the way of perfection¹ and may be called a perfect Christian.² He will not fully reach the end for which he strives, but let him none the less apply himself resolutely to the pursuit of it.

Relative perfection, therefore, in which state we ought to desire to live, is a constant endeavour towards that which is best, towards that fulness of charity when sin is no longer committed: it is a voyage, so to speak, in which we sail onwards towards our fatherland, which is heaven: it is a forward march without a halt; a race towards the most perfect, a mounting upwards to God. These Augustinian expressions hereafter became classical in spirituality.

If the perfecting of our spiritual life be nothing else than growth in justice and charity,³ then its essential law will be progress. St. Augustine strongly insists on this capital point of spirituality.

It is necessary to continue advancing and never to stop. To love is to advance, and the more one loves the more one advances, for charity is active; it cannot remain idle—*Ipsa dilectio vacare non potest*.⁴ Moreover, to stop is to go back: to slacken in order to survey the road already run is to lose ardour in the pursuit of that which is best; it is to cease to love truly.⁵ Always to do better, always to keep marching, always to advance, such will be the motto of perfection.⁶

He who would insure this uninterrupted progress will do well never to rest content with himself. "Be ever discontented with thy state," recommends St. Augustine, "if thou

¹ *De perfect. justit. homin.*, n. 20: *Ingredi autem sine macula non absurde etiam ille dicitur, non qui jam perfectus est, sed qui ad ipsam perfectionem irreprehensibiliter currit, carens criminibus damnabilibus, atque ipsa peccata venialia non negligens mundare elemosynis. Ingressum quippe, hoc est, iter nostrum quo tendimus ad perfectionem munda mundat oratio . . . sine macula noster ad perfectionem cursus habeatur. Cf. De Doctrina Christ., i, n. 10.*

² *De natura et gratia*, n. 15. *Proficientium est enim via; quamvis bene proficientes dicantur perfecti viatores.*

³ *Enarr. in psalm. LXXXIII*, n. 10: *quanto ergo plus amaveris, tanto plus ascendes.*

⁴ *Enarr. in psalm.*, XXXI, 5; LXXXV, 6; LXXXIII, 10; CXXVI, 1, 2.

⁵ These formulae which have become proverbial as regards spirituality are drawn from the *Letter* of Pelagius to the virgin Demetrias, n. 27, a letter which for a long time was placed amongst those of St. Augustine (P.L. XXXIII, 1118): *Tamdiu non relabimur retro, quamdiu ad priora contendimus: at ubi coeperimus stare descendimus; nostrumque non progredi, jam reverti est. . . . Si volumus non redire, currendum est.*

⁶ St. Augustine, *Sermo CLXIX*, n. 18: *Semper adde, semper ambula, semper profice: noli in via remanere, noli retro redire, noli deviare. Remanet qui non proficit; retro redit qui ad ea revolvitur unde jam abscesserat. Cassian, Collatio xvii, 5: ad profectum spiritualium rerum, virtutemque tendentibus periculosa ac noxia est et parva dilatio.*

wouldst reach one more perfect; for as soon as thou becomest inwardly complacent thou ceasest to advance. If thou shouldst say, 'It is enough, I have reached perfection,' all is lost.¹ . . . For it is the function of perfection to make one know one's imperfection."² The Christian who knows himself well is displeased with himself, humbles himself and despises himself. Moreover, this intimate self-knowledge is most useful in the progress towards perfection.³ Nothing hampers the march onwards so much as pride, and nothing helps it so much as humility.⁴ This virtue, therefore, must be made the very groundwork of the spiritual building. If we desire to raise it up within ourselves we must begin by digging deeply within our souls the foundation of humility.⁵ He who heads towards perfection strives to unite himself to God with all possible speed. Now the two virtues by which the soul is brought nearest to God are humility and charity.⁶

The charity of which perfection consists places the soul in a well-defined attitude in the sight of God and His creatures. St. Augustine has analyzed this attitude with great force and has drawn up important principles concerning the use which a Christian ought to make of creatures.

Charity, according to the holy Doctor, is an impulse of the soul towards God and our neighbour; towards God in order to enjoy Him for His own sake; towards our neighbour in order to enjoy him because of God and in the measure allowed by Him. It is the contrary of covetousness, which is the impulse of the soul towards itself, its neighbour, and others, in order to possess them for their own sakes in an inordinate manner.⁷

This doctrine becomes more clear from the distinction which St. Augustine draws between the words *enjoy* (*frui*) and *use* (*uti*). Something is *enjoyed*, he says, when we love it in such a way as to be attached to it and delighted by it for its own sake and when we make it the goal of all happiness. It is *used* when it is made a means of attaining to that, the enjoyment of which is desired.⁸ We should enjoy God alone and only use creatures. We are like travellers journeying to our heavenly country, the only object of true enjoyment. During our pilgrimage here below creatures are given us to make use of, like the ship which carries us to

¹ *Sermo* CLXIX, *id.*

² *Id.*, CLXX, n. 8. *Cf. De spiritu et littera*, n. 64.

³ *Enarr. in psalm.*, XXXI, n. 13, 14; *Sermo* CXXXVII, n. 4. *Cf. De Trinitate* IV, n. 1.

⁴ *Enarr. in psalm.*, LVIII, n. 5; CXXX, n. 14.

⁵ *Sermo* LXIX, n. 2.

⁶ *Id.*, XXI, n. 2; *Enarr. in psalm.*, LXXIV, n. 2.

⁷ *De doctrina christiana*, lib. III, n. 16.

⁸ *Id.*, lib. I, n. 3, 36, 37.

other lands. What would be thought of the foolish mariner who forgot the port for which he was bound in his attachment to the means of transport?¹ Let us therefore use creatures, but only in the measure needed. Let us not seek in them our final happiness; this we must find only in God, for He alone is our end and sovereign blessedness.²

True charity, the love which is *free and chaste*, as St. Augustine calls it, forces us to love God for His own sake because He is essential goodness, and we stretch out to Him as the only real object of our joy.

He who approaches God only to obtain temporal benefits would not love Him purely and chaste (pure et caste). His love would be that of self-interest, and it would not in reality be God that he loved. The only reward we ought to desire in loving God is God Himself—Him "*whom we shall see as He is*" (1 Joan. iii. 2).³

According to St. Augustine, pure, unselfish love never loses sight of the heavenly reward. It is love, purified as much as possible from earthly desires, always hoping to enjoy God some day in heaven. Thus Bossuet was able to cite St. Augustine in opposition to the dreams of the quietists concerning pure love.⁴

Not only does charity turn us away from unduly seeking after creatures, but it assures us of the possession of God even here below. In fact, one cannot love God without possessing Him within.⁵ Our happiness is the possession of God now by charity, and hereafter in the beatific vision in heaven. The more we love God the more perfect do we become and the happier we are.

A bond is thus seen to be established between the moral perfection of man and his beatitude. This had been already observed in the philosophy of Plato. St. Augustine, too, teaches that that which renders a man good must needs make him happy. *Inde necesse est ut fiat homo beatus unde fit*

¹ *De doctrina christiana*, lib. I, n. 4. Cf. *De civitate Dei*, lib. XI, cap. xxv.

² *Sermo CLXXVII*, n. 8: *Utimur enim pro necessitate, fruimur pro jucunditate. Ergo ista temporalia dedit Deus ad utendum, se ad fruendum.*

³ *Enarr. in psalm. LXXII*, n. 32: *Factum est cor castum; gratis jam amatur Deus, non ab illo petitur aliud praeium. Qui aliud praeium petit a Deo et propterea vult servire Deo, carius facit quod vult accipere quam ipsum a quo vult accipere. Quid ergo? Nullum praeium Dei? Nullum praeter ipsum. Praeium Dei, ipse Deus est. Hoc amat, hoc diligit; si aliud dilexerit, non erit castus amor. Cf. Enarr. in psalm., LV, n. 17; Sermo CXXXVII, n. 10; De beata vita, n. 18.*

⁴ Summary of doctrine in the book entitled, *Explanation of the Maxims of the Saints*, viii, x.

⁵ *Sermo XXXIV*, n. 5: *Deus clamat nobis: amate me et habebitis me, quia nec potestis amare me nisi habueritis me.*

bonus.¹ In spite of the dicta of certain philosophers, neither riches, nor honour, nor other worldly endowments can give us true happiness; for when we have obtained them we are more tormented by the fear of losing than we were by the desire of possessing them. Happiness cannot come from the possession of some good which may be torn from us in spite of ourselves.² Besides, God has made us for Himself, and the heart remains unsatisfied and troubled as long as He dwells not therein.³ In loving God, the supreme goodness, we are made better.⁴ The secret, therefore, of true happiness is an unceasing progress towards perfection by growing in charity.

II.—HOW TO BECOME PERFECT

THE way of perfection, then, is growth in charity; in that single-minded seeking after God which produces true love and renders us happy. What ought we to do in order to make progress in this love, or, in other words, what work has the Christian to perform in order to be perfect? The faithful Christian is advised by St. Augustine to bring his efforts to bear chiefly on these three points: to chastise the body and bring it into subjection in order to avoid sin and to obey more easily the divine law; to practise the Christian virtues, more especially brotherly love; and lastly, to pray, in which he includes all duties of piety and the exercising of "holy love."⁵

St. Augustine does not describe outward penances and bodily austerities at length. What above all he wishes us to understand is the need for interior mortification, for the struggle of the will, aided by grace, against the flesh. To mortify the flesh is to refuse consent to its suggestions; for the least consent given to the promptings of evil is enough to cause sin and to increase the power of passion.⁶ To feel the incentive to pleasure and to resist it is mortification: to feel it no more is already to have mortified it.⁷

This resistance of the spirit to the flesh constitutes the Christian combat witnessed by God. As we make progress we must perforce restrain ourselves more and more from inward concupiscence, and so reduce the number of our

¹ *Ep. CXXX, 3. Cf. De civit. Dei, X, cap. iii: Ideo beati quia illo fine [Deo] perfecti. Cf. VIII, cap. viii.*

² *Ep. CXXX, 3; Ep. CLV, 5-10; De moribus Eccl. Cath., I, cap. iii.*

³ *Confessions, I, 1: Fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.*

⁴ *Enarr. in psalm., CXLIV, 1: Bonum amando nos meliores effcimur.*

⁵ *De perfect. justit. hominis, cap. viii, n. 18, 19.*

⁶ *De continentia, cap. ii, iii.*

⁷ *Sermo CLVI, 9: illam (delectationem) dum non consentis, mortificas; quum coeperit omnino non delectari, mortificasti.*

faults. For the more we advance in justice and perfection the further we recede from sin.¹ Augustine has drawn a vivid picture, in his treatise *On the Christian Combat* (*De agone christiano*),² of this battle, in which each one of us must be engaged against the flesh, the world, and the devil.

In this fight with concupiscence the rôle of charity predominates. As already stated, there is a complete contrast between charity and covetousness, which, being at enmity, tend to mutual destruction; for charity is the love of God and neighbour, and covetousness is the love of the world and earthly things.³ From these two affections spring the two cities of which St. Augustine speaks in his immortal work *On the City of God*. The love of self pushed to the extent of despising God is the earthly city, and that of God to the extent of despising self the heavenly city.⁴ The continuous and unchanging conflict between these two affections, existing since the fall of the angels and perpetually rekindled in the human breast, accounts for the constant struggle between good and evil from which we suffer here below.

Man, being both heavenly and earthly, feels painfully within him the antagonism of these two affections: the one will triumph over the ruin of the other, but one only must prevail.⁵ If his heart has not charity the passions will wield their tyranny therein, and in order to free himself from this servitude he must strive to love the supreme goodness. The reign of charity can only arise upon the ruins of concupiscence.⁶ Charity increases in us in proportion as covetousness is diminished, or the reverse.⁷ Bossuet,⁸ commenting on St. Augustine, likens these two affections to the pans of a pair of scales, in which one is lowered in the same ratio as the other is raised: the weight given to charity is withdrawn from covetousness. Divine love lifts us up to God and opposes the attraction of eternal joy to those evil inclinations which draw us down.⁹ "How shall I speak, O my God," cries St. Augustine in his *Confessions*, "how shall I speak of that weight of the passions which draws us down into the depths of the abyss, and of the power of Thy charity which uplifts us thence by Thy spirit? . . . How shall I express myself? We sink and we swim . . . our corrupt nature

¹ *De perfect. justit.* cap. xiii, n. 31; *In Joan. tract.* XLI, 12.

² P.L. XL, 283-310.

³ *Enarr. in psalm.*, XXXI, 5.

⁴ *De civitate Dei*, XIV, 28: *Fecerunt itaque civitates duas amores duo: terrenam scilicet amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei, coelestem vero amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui.* Cf. *De Genesi ad litteram*, XI, cap. xiv.

⁵ *Enarr. in psalm.*, XVIII, n. 15.

⁶ *De doctrina christiana*, III, 16, 17. *Enchiridion*, n. 31.

⁷ *Enchiridion*, n. 32: *minuitur autem cupiditas charitate crescente.*

⁸ Sermon for Easter Day (1654). Lebarcq, I, 507.

⁹ *Enarr. in psalm.*, CXXII, 1; CXXVI, 1.

plunges us into the depths by the love of vanity; and the holiness of Thy spirit brings us to the surface through the love of peace, in order that we may raise up our hearts to Thee. . . .

"The tendency of a body is determined by its gravity. . . . Fire rises, a stone falls. . . . When water is poured upon oil the oil rises to the surface, and the water sinks below. . . . My specific gravity is love; it bears me whithersoever I am borne (*Pondus meum amor meus: eo feror quocumque feror*). We are set on fire, O Lord, by Thy gift and are drawn upwards towards heaven; we are consumed in Thy flames and we go on; we make holy ascents in our hearts and as we rise we sing the gradual psalms. Thy fires, Thy most sweet fires, O Lord, enkindle us, and we advance because we go up towards the peace of Jerusalem."¹

The heavenly peace towards which we ascend is the fruit of obedience as well as charity. It is the "tranquillity of order" (*Pax omnium rerum tranquillitas ordinis*²) when passion within us is made subject to reason, and this to God, order and peace are the result. Obedience of the flesh is the offspring of obedience to the spirit. If we desire to be obeyed by the flesh let us begin by obeying God. When the soul is fully submissive to God who is superior to it, it will merit the power to rule the flesh which is inferior, and thus will it obtain order and merit peace.³

This obedience which engenders peace, and may be said to be the mother and guardian of all virtues,⁴ is easy to him who knows how to love. Charity makes us love that which is lovable. Yet what is more lovable than the will of God made manifest in His commandments? Therefore, in order to act aright we must love God; the divine precepts will be the more perfectly fulfilled the more intense the love.⁵ Does not love, moreover, render that which prompts it more sweet and agreeable? And ought we to find the divine precepts difficult when we love our Lord? When we love our work we do not tire, and if we do, the weariness itself is loved.⁶ All is rendered easy and pleasant by love:⁷ indeed, it is the motive power of the soul, the hand with which she acts.⁸

¹ *Confessions*, XIII, 7, 9.

² *De civitate Dei*, XIX, cap. xiii. Cf. *Enarr. in psalm.*, LXXXIII, 10.

³ *Enarr. in psalm.*, CXLIII, 6; *agnosce ordinem, quaere pacem. Tu Deo, tibi caro. Quid justius? Quid pulchrius? Tu majori, minor tibi: servi tu ei qui fecit te, ut tibi serviat quod factum est propter te. Cf. Sermo CXXVIII, n. 5.*

⁴ *De civitate Dei*, XIV, cap. xii. Cf. *De bono conjugali*, n. 30, 32.

⁵ *Enarr. in psalm.*, XXXI, 5; XXXII, 6; LXXIX, 13.

⁶ *De bono viduitatis*, n. 26: *in eo quod amatur aut non laboratur aut et labor amatur.*

⁷ *Sermo LXX*, 3; *De natura et gratia*, n. 83: *Omnia quippe sunt facilia charitati.*

⁸ *Enarr. in psalm.*, IX, 15.

But love does not rest content with the observance of precepts; it delights to go beyond mere duty. In order to triumph more effectively over the unruliness of the flesh we must renounce even lawful pleasure. This degree of perfection is quite proper to those who experience in their advance an increasing thirst for privation and sacrifice. To hear a beautiful voice, to inhale a sweet scent, to enjoy a fine and moral play are things lawful; to deprive ourselves of them is to follow the inspirations of charity and to put the encroachments of earthly desire more completely aside.¹

It is, above all, by the practice of continence and virginity that love brings about the greatest triumphs of the spirit over the flesh.² These two virtues satiate the charity of austere and unceasing renunciation. They also lift man above the senses and make him like the angels; they raise him to a state, so to speak, in which there is nothing carnal, and they will cause him to shine with special brightness in the world to come.³

The pursuit of perfection requires not only the mortification of the flesh, but also the practice of all Christian virtues, the chief of which are the three theological. The fervent Christian lives by faith, hope, and charity.⁴ Faith and hope come first, for it is impossible to love God before believing and hoping in Him. But charity reacts upon them by vivifying and perfecting them. Faith and hope could not, indeed, lead to salvation if they were not "informed" by charity; and he who loves has the necessary assurance that he will hope and believe.⁵

As to the remaining virtues, they are so engendered by charity that St. Augustine introduces the idea of it into his definition of virtue in general. Virtue, he says, consists in loving that which is truly lovable—i.e., God, and our neighbour because of God.⁶ To choose aright the object of our love, and to be watchful and cautious lest the wiles of the devil turn us aside from it, is to be prudent. Not to be drawn away from it by difficulty, trial, or adversity is to be strong; to place before it no earthly joy or pleasure is to be temperate; never to abandon it to serve evil is to walk in the path of

¹ *Sermo CLIX*, 2-4.

² *De continentia*, cap. iii.

³ *De Sancta virginitate*, cap. xiii. *Virginalis autem integritas et perpiam continentiam ab omni concubitu immunitas angelica portio est et in carne corruptibili incorruptionis perpetuae meditatio. . . . Habebunt magnum aliquid praeter ceteros in illa communi immortalitate qui habent aliquid jam non carnis in carne.* Observe the importance of humility in preserving virginity. *Id.*, cap. xxxi to liii.

⁴ *Sermo CLXX*, n. 8; *Enchiridion*, cap. cxvii, n. 31.

⁵ *Id.*, XC, n. 8; *Enchiridion*, *id.*: *Qui recte amat procul dubio recte credit et sperat.* Cf. *In Joan.*, tract. LXXXIII, n. 3.

⁶ *Ep.* CLV, 13: *Virtus non est nisi diligere quod diligendum est.*

justice.¹ Charity, then, is the keystone of the arch in the spiritual building of the cardinal virtues; it is that which holds together the different parts. Take away charity, and the whole crumbles to the ground.

The efforts of the faithful Christian to cultivate virtue find a lively stimulant in the loving of Christ. We try to imitate those whom we love. If we love Jesus we desire to be like Him, and He is the perfect model of every virtue.² To imitate Him is to hasten onwards to perfection.

It is unnecessary here to set forth the teaching of St. Augustine on each one of the Christian virtues, but we shall do well to ponder over his beautiful thoughts on charity towards our neighbour.

The love of our neighbour, moreover, is not essentially separable from the love of God, for in the end they are one and the same. We love our neighbour with the same love as that with which we love God.³ We are all one body, the mystical body of Christ. If we do not love our brethren we do not love the body of Christ; and not to love Christ's body is not to love Him who is the head; and not to love Christ is not to love the Father of Christ.⁴ We cannot, therefore, love God without loving our neighbour also. The love of God and of our neighbour are one and the same gift of the Holy Spirit, through whom we are able to carry out the dual precept. Nevertheless, the two objects of charity are according to sacred order: first we love God for Himself and then our neighbour for the sake of God. It is even possible to come to love God through loving our neighbour.⁵ But both these loves are necessary; they are like the two feet with which the Christian runs in the way of holiness.⁶

Fraternal charity shows itself in the forgiveness of injuries, the love of enemies, kindness, mutual help, and above all by assisting our neighbour in all his manifold needs, both material and spiritual.⁷

St. Augustine very highly practised this fraternal charity of which he speaks so eloquently. He would never allow the reputation of his neighbour to be injured in his presence. In the refectory of his community at Hippo, where he enter-

¹ *Ep.* CLV, 13, 16; *De moribus Eccl. Cath.*, I, cap. xxv.

² *Sermo* CCCIV, n. 2. See Chapter X as to what St. Augustine says concerning the place Christ should occupy in our piety.

³ *Sermo* CCLXV, n. 9: *Non alia charitas diligit proximum quam illa quae diligit Deum. Non ergo alia charitas est. Qua charitate proximum, ipsa charitate diligimus et Deum.*

⁴ *In Ep.* Joan. ad Parthos, tract. X, n. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Enarr.* in psalm. XXXIII, 10: *Duos pedes habeto, noli esse claudus. Qui sunt duos pedes? Duo praecepta dilectionis, Dei et proximi. Istis pedibus curre ad Deum, accede ad illum.*

⁷ *Enarr.* in psalm. CXLIII, 7-9; in psalm. XXXVI, 13; in psalm. XXXI, 5.

tained many guests, he had written up in large letters the following warning: "He who takes pleasure in traducing the absent must clearly understand that he has no place at this table."¹

It was with untiring patience and most edifying gentleness and humility that he bore with the ardour and insults of his adversaries in the numerous controversies that he entered into in defence of the Catholic faith. Always anxious to be of use to others, he often composed whole treatises, in spite of his overwhelming occupations, in order to reply to some question put to him in a letter. His incredible literary activity did not prevent him from being at the disposition of his people, to smooth over their differences and to relieve with liberal alms all the misery brought to his knowledge.

The way of perfection demands of us work, constant effort, and above all much prayer; for it is God who will lead us by His grace to the end desired. The road which leads to holiness is filled with obstacles, and the strength needed to overcome them can be obtained only by persevering prayer.² The higher we aspire to rise in virtue the more urgent the need of prayer; for we are not able of ourselves to ascend to God: it is His grace which must take hold of us and draw us. It is not, therefore, surprising to find St. Augustine constantly exhorting to prayer, for he who knows how to pray will learn how to sanctify himself.³

But prayer addressed to God does not consist only of petition, but should include also the duties which we owe to Him, of worship and praise. St. Augustine uses the word *piety* to signify the aggregate of religious duties which the devout Christian renders to God; and these he refers back to love: *Pietas cultus Dei est, nec colitur ille nisi amando.*⁴

Piety, which is that filial sentiment which makes the soul pray to God and perform other religious duties, consists, therefore, in loving God without looking for any other reward than that which He sends.⁵ To love God with our whole heart and our neighbour as ourselves for the sake of God, such is really divine worship and true religion, such is healthy piety and the sure way of serving God.⁶ Our heart is an altar upon which the fire of holy love should constantly be burning as a sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving, and expiation.

¹ Possidius, *Vita S. Augustini*, 22:

*Quisquis amat dictis absentum rodere vilam,
Hanc mensam indignam noverit esse sibi.*

² *De natura et gratia*, n. 78, 82; *De perfectione justitiae*, n. 20.

³ The famous formula: *Vere novit recte vivere qui recte novit orare*, is drawn from a doubtful sermon of St. Augustine, *Sermo LV*, 1 (P.L. XXXVIII, 1849).

⁴ *Ep. CLXVII*, n. 11; *Cf. Ep. CXL*, n. 45.

⁵ *Sermo XCI*, n. 3.

⁶ *De civitate Dei*, X, cap. iii.

When we place ourselves in our Lord's presence all aglow with love we send up to Him a perfume of sweet-smelling incense.¹ True praise is that which comes from love, and he only who loves God is able to bless Him as he should.² To cease to praise God we must cease to love Him.³

III.—THE DEGREES OF PERFECTION—THE GRADUAL PSALMS

As St. Augustine makes all spiritual doctrine depend on charity, it is not surprising to find him testing the advancement of the soul in perfection by its progress in love. We are lifted up to God by charity, and the yearnings of the heart are as the steps of the mystical ladder by which we ascend.⁴

Has St. Augustine attempted to number the steps of this mystic ladder and to establish the phases through which we must pass to reach perfection?

The celebrated extract from his treatise *De natura et gratia*⁵ is well known. "When charity begins in the soul justice begins there also; when charity advances, so, too, does justice; when charity is great, justice also is great; and when charity is perfect justice has reached perfection." Elsewhere St. Augustine speaks again of the progress of charity, which is born in the Christian, nourished and strengthened within him, and finally becomes perfect by enabling him to be willing to die for the love of his neighbour.⁶

Ought we, then, to conclude according to St. Augustine, that in order to reach perfection charity must invariably pass through four successive stages: its beginning, its early development, its full force, and its perfectibility? Such appears to have been most probably in the mind of the Bishop of Hippo in describing these different phases of charity.⁷

For charity to be engendered in man he must first become a Christian if he is not one already. If a lukewarm and

¹ *De civitate Dei*, X, cap. iii.

² *Ep.* CXL, cap. xviii, n. 45; *Enarr. in psalm.* CXLVII, n. 3.

³ *Enarr. in psalm.* LXXXIII, n. 8. ⁴ *Enarr. in psalm.* LXXXV, 6.

⁵ *Cap.* lxx, n. 84: *Charitas ergo inchoata, inchoata iustitia est; charitas provecta, provecta iustitia est; charitas magna, magna iustitia est; charitas perfecta, perfecta iustitia est.*

⁶ *In Ep. Joannis ad Parthos*, tract. V, 4: *ut perficiatur (charitas), nascitur; cum fuerit nata, nutritur; cum fuerit nutrita, roboratur; cum fuerit roborata, perficitur . . . si quis . . . paratus sit pro fratribus etiam mori, perfecta est in illo charitas.*

⁷ *Cassian, Collatio*, xi, 6-8, considers that there are three degrees in the ascension of the soul towards perfection. The first is that of fear; this belongs to *slaves*. The second is that of hope and of desire of heavenly rewards; this belongs to those souls that are *mercenary* and who labour to be rewarded. In the third degree finally are found those disinterested Christians who labour for the love of goodness and for God. These are the *children* of God.

negligent Christian, he must be aroused from apathy by the fear of eternal punishment and the inducement of heavenly reward. Thus will he be led to a life of devotion and prayer.¹ For the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Now when this fear penetrates the heart it wrests from it its evil habits, which give place to love, which then reigns as queen and in turn casts out fear.² Thus does charity take possession of the soul and become active and progressive.

But the Christian who starts out on the way of perfection will encounter difficulties; perseverance is irksome. He will need to pray earnestly that God grant him the power to do his duty and to perform good works.³

A growth in charity will soon reward his effort and goodwill. He then feels within himself an eager desire to rise higher, and begins to despise earthly things and to think often of God. He counts as nothing the pleasures of this world and becomes indifferent to loss and gain; and even thinks of selling all that he has and giving to the poor and following Jesus. The Christian in this attitude of mind is in a state of progress. He will have to suffer trial and contradiction and criticism from those who cannot bear to see others better than themselves; and indeed it may be said that it is impossible to make progress without passing through this inevitable ordeal.⁴ Thus the Christian sets his course in the way of perfection; he carefully avoids mortal sin and cleanses himself more and more from venial faults, and gives himself up to acts of "holy desire"—that is to say, of divine love.⁵

In fact, it is by loving that the soul makes progress and rises towards perfection, and, being well advanced, can enter into the spirit of the Gradual Psalms,⁶ which are none other than a song of love. It understands—to use the happy expression employed by one of St. Augustine's correspondents⁷—that the measure of loving God is to love Him without measure. It moreover becomes immersed in the bosom of God as in an ocean of divine love, and so lost there that it has no other desire than that of the happiness of heaven.

"Give me Thyself, O my God!" cries out St. Augustine in the last book of his *Confessions*,⁸ and again: "Give me Thyself, for I love Thee; and if I love Thee yet but little, make Thou my love more strong. I am unable to sound the depths of my soul to know what is lacking to make it so

¹ *De natura et gratia*, n. 82.

² *De natura et gratia*, n. 82.

³ *Enarr. in psalm.* CXIX, 3.

⁴ *De perfect. justit.* n. 18, 20.

⁵ *Enarr. in psalm.* LXXXIII, n. 10.

⁶ Severus, Bishop of Milevis, *Ep.* CIX, n. 2 (P.L. XXXIII, 449). *Nullus nobis amandi modus imponitur, quando ipse ibi modus est sine modo amare. Cf. De moribus Eccl. Cath., I, cap. viii.*

⁸ XIII, 8.

² *Ep.* CXL, n. 45.

perfect that my life be cast into Thee, embraced, and turn not aside until totally hidden in Thy breast. That only which I know is that all within me and without that is not Thee is evil for me; and that all riches except my God are poverty."

Like St. Augustine, the soul is deeply distressed, when once it has tasted the delights of love, at having turned aside so long to yield to the seduction of creatures: "Too late have I loved Thee, O beauty, ever old and new; too late have I loved Thee!"¹ This delay is one more motive which compels the loving soul to give itself daily the more to God, knowing that the Well-Beloved desires wholly to possess it.²

"Hearken, O Christian, and hear what the divine love speaks through the lips of wisdom: *My son, give Me thy heart* (Prov. xxiii. 26). Mark well these words. Has He willed that thou shouldst keep a portion of thy heart for thyself, He who has said to thee *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole spirit*? What is there left of thy heart wherewith to love thyself? What is there left of thy soul? What of thy spirit? Divine love does not admit partition."³

He who loves expects to be tried. Here below we are in a valley of tears, and the weight of affliction often brings weeping. But tears of sorrow are like the new wine with which they who truly love the Lord become inebriated.⁴

The Christian soul, when mystically uplifted above itself, wonders that God should need to command our love rather than permit it, for even His permission might make us marvel.

"What am I to Thee, O Lord," cries St. Augustine, "that Thou shouldst desire to be loved by me and that Thou shouldst be angry if I do it not, and threaten me with chastisement? Is it not great enough misery already not to love Thee?"⁵

Not only does God wish us to love Him, but He seeks also to stimulate our love by making Himself lovable in our eyes, and inspiring us to praise His infinite perfections. We are inclined to love those whom we praise. Now God, in order to assist us in praising Him, has, by His Holy Spirit, inspired us with worthy praises. God makes Himself thus praised and glorified by the lips of His servants in order the more to foster their love.⁶

In His desire to be loved, God incites His children to love. He pierces the hearts of the faithful with the arrows of His love, which are those burning words of His which enflame souls. Our Lord desires our love ever more and more, for which cause He permits Christian hearts to be pierced un-

¹ *Confessions*, X, 27.

² *Sermo XXXIV*, n. 7: *totum exegit te qui fecit te*.

³ *Id.*, XXIV, n. 7.

⁴ *Enarr. in psalm*. LXXXIII, n. 10.

⁵ *Confessions*, I, 5.

⁶ *Enarr. in psalm*. CXLIV, n. 1.

ceasingly with His fiery darts to enable them to increase in love.¹

And when love in the soul reaches the heights of perfection, that soul is raised to a life of intimate and habitual union with God. For love tends towards union; it desires to be but one with the object loved. *Quid amor omnis? nonne unum vult fieri cum eo quod amat?*²

In this state of mystic union the soul then understands that love causes God to be present and that He is so much the nearer and the more perfectly within us the more we love Him. This present life becomes a burden to it, and it is filled with sighs for the time when it will be fully united to its Well-Beloved.³ Its love is so strong that it is like a foretaste of heavenly joy. "Though on earth, thou art in heaven if thou lovest God": *Stans in terra in caelo es, si diligas Deum.*⁴

IV.—ST. AUGUSTINE AND TEMPTATION

ALTHOUGH I have no intention of fully expounding the whole of the spiritual teaching of St. Augustine, it is nevertheless indispensable to set forth his doctrine of temptation; for it is the great hindrance to the soul's progress towards God. The penetrating mind of the Bishop of Hippo had studied the phenomenon of temptation from every side. Later spiritual writers have done little more than comment on his teaching.

Temptation may either bring about ruin for the Christian or become a means of merit. If he yields to it, death is engendered in the soul; if he overcomes it, it becomes a help towards progress in goodness and virtue.

It is therefore most necessary to know exactly the nature of temptation—why we are subjected to it, what are its causes, and above all how we must resist it.

Temptation, speaking generally, is any enticement to evil. St. Augustine, by precise psychological analysis, clearly distinguishes three elements or phases of temptation.

First of all comes the suggestion or insinuation of evil thought in the soul. The imagination presents to itself, in a manner more or less vivid, according to the strength of the temptation, the attractiveness of the thing forbidden. The unhealthy images at times impress themselves upon the mind with such tenacity that they become an obsession. Instinctively—and this is the second phase—the lower part of the soul, concupiscence, turns towards the thought of evil, puts a certain pleasure therein, and instigates the will to let it have its way. It is at this moment that the temptation exercises

¹ *Enarr. in psalm. CXIX, n. 5.* ² *De ordine, II, n. 48.*

³ *Ep. CLV, n. 13. Cf. n. 4.*

⁴ *Enarr. in psalm. XXXV, n. 6.*

its full strength, and then it may develop either into a victory or a defeat. The higher part of the soul remains free to resist the evil suggestion or to consent to it, and in this alternative lies the real trial of the temptation.

In the third place, therefore, which is the critical phase of resistance or consent, the will determines to wrestle with the temptation and to resist it by refusing to acquiesce, or else it abandons itself thereto. In the first place, it is triumphant and God will reward the victory, or again it commits sin and deserves punishment.

The temptation is violent when the thought of evil and the evil pleasure obsess one so strongly that, in spite of energetic resistance of the will, it cannot be got rid of. It is light when easily brushed aside.

Such is temptation.¹

St. Augustine finds symbols of these three phases in the three agents of the first temptation which took place in the earthly paradise: the serpent, Eve, and Adam. The serpent suggested to Eve the thought of disobeying God by eating the forbidden fruit; Eve took a lively pleasure in contemplating this fruit. She partook of it and invited her husband to partake also.

Neither the evil suggestion of the serpent nor the pleasure therein experienced by Eve would have sufficed to ruin the human race without the consent of Adam, who alone brought about the fall. So, in like manner—and this should be carefully noted—in our temptations, neither the thought of evil nor the pleasure that accompanies it constitutes sin of itself. They come through human frailty and are a conveyance of hereditary weakness. The will lacks the power to prevent them, although it is free to consent or not, and this consent of the will alone brings about sin.²

St. Augustine rightly points out, in order to calm delicate and anxious consciences, that the inferior part of the soul, the seat of concupiscence, may continue to take pleasure in the thought of evil, in spite of the ardent refusal by the will. Thus are borne out the words of the Apostle: The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh (Gal. v. 17). But it is one thing to feel pleasure by reason of a temptation and another to consent to it. The first is not dependent on the will, which is responsible only for consent or resistance. This is why consent begets sin and resistance carries with it victory.³

¹ *Enarr. in psalm. CXLIII*, n. 6. *Enarr. in psalm. XC*, n. 7.

² *De Trinitate*, lib. xii, 17; *Enarr. in psalm. CII*, n. 5. The will, of course, needs grace to resist temptation.

³ *De Trinitate, id.* St. Augustine makes a distinct difference from the point of view of sinfulness, between consent, pure and simple, to an evil thought, and the frustrated desire to do that evil, which the thought represents. Nevertheless, both are grievous sins and lead to damnation unless forgiven. *De Trinitate*, lib., xii, n. 18.

St. Augustine emphasizes this doctrine in *The City of God*, in order to console the virgins and other Christian women violated by the Goths during the sack of Rome in 410. "Virtue," he says, "has its seat in the soul, whence it rules the body. The latter, therefore, remains holy so long as the will which regulates its motions is holy. As long as the will stands firm in its determined opposition to the evil, every violence that can be brought to bear upon the body does not render us culpable. Such assaults do not bring about the loss of chastity."¹

Temptation is inevitable here below; the life of man is full of it, and, indeed, it must be so, for we are on a period of trial.² How can we be tried if we are not tempted? *Sine tentatione probatus esse nullus potest.*³

Temptation is like a battle, in which we must either conquer or die: the one who vanquishes is saved, but the one who is overthrown is condemned.⁴ In the Lord's Prayer, moreover, we do not ask God that we should not be tempted, but that we should not be led into temptations by which we might be overcome.⁵

This need of temptation is such that Christ, our Head, instead of freeing us from this ordeal, willed, on the contrary, to be tempted Himself, in order to teach the faithful, His soldiers, how to fight. The three chief causes of our temptations are, according to the First Epistle of St. John (ii. 15, 16), the lust of the flesh, pride, and curiosity.⁶ Now Jesus was subject to a temptation of the flesh when He was invited by the devil to change stones into bread, in order to satisfy hunger. He was tempted by pride when He was shown all the kingdoms of the world from a high mountain; and, lastly, He was tempted by curiosity when He was urged to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple.⁷ Christ desired to experience all these forms of temptation⁸ to which we are subject in order to be like us; in the same way that He willed

¹ *De civitate Dei*, lib. I, cap. xvi.

² *Enarr. in psalm. LX, n. 3*: *Vita nostra in hac peregrinatione non potest esse sine tentatione, qui proventus noster per tentationem nostram fit, nec sibi quisque innotescit nisi tentatus, nec potest coronari nisi vicerit, nec potest vincere nisi certaverit, nec potest certare nisi inimicum et tentationes habuerit.* The Fathers of the desert recognized this need for temptation. Cf. Macarius the Egyptian, *Liber de elevatione mentis*, 13 (P.G. XXXIV, 945). St. Jerome, *Ep. XIV*, etc.

³ *De sermone Domini in monte*, lib. II, n. 30.

⁴ *Annotation. in Job*, cap. vii (P.L. XXXIV, 832); *Enarr. in psalm. LXI, n. 20*; *in psalm. XC, n. 2*.

⁵ *De sermone Dom. in monte*, II, n. 34.

⁶ *Enarr. in psalm. VIII, n. 13*: *Haec autem tria genera vitiorum, id est voluptas carnis, et superbia et curiositas omnia peccata concludunt.* St. Augustine translates *concupiscentia oculorum* of St. John's text by the word *curiositas*. See his commentary on the First Epistle of St. John. *In epistolam Joannis ad Parthos*, tract. II, n. 13, 14.

⁷ *Enarr. in psalm. VIII, n. 13.*

⁸ *I.e.*, from without.

to die because we die, and to rise again because we shall rise again some day. Furthermore, He desired to be tempted in order that through His merits we should not be overcome by the tempter. *Ideo tentatus est Christus ne vincatur a tentatore christianus.*¹ We are members of His mystical body; thus we have been tempted in Him and also victorious in Him. His victory over the devil is also ours, and we are conquerors in Him and through Him.² How great is the power given us over temptation by our union with Christ!

Since, then, we cannot do away with temptations, we are constrained to profit by them and to make use of them as a means of sanctification. Their usefulness is carefully brought out by St. Augustine for the greater consolation of those souls subject to temptation and trial. He tells us that temptation teaches us, purifies us, and advances us in virtue.

It teaches us in making us know what we are and of what we are capable. It shows us to ourselves. The inward dispositions of man would lack the occasion to show themselves without trial or temptation.³ Indeed, it may often be said that temptation makes manifest the sin which is already in man rather than renders him sinful.⁴ It is the shake which causes the maggoty fruit to fall from the tree. It is temptation, then, which shows man what he is, with his qualities and defects, his strength and his weakness, his patience and his lack of courage. Without it we should be ignorant of ourselves, like St. Peter, who thought himself so strong when he told Jesus that he would die with Him rather than deny Him.⁵ Temptation induces us to pray. If it did not exist we should be inclined to neglect prayer.⁶

It makes the just progress in well-doing. It tries their virtue, consolidates and perfects them.⁷ Their heavenly reward by this means is increased.⁸ It is through temptation that our spiritual life advances; he who is never tempted will make no progress.⁹

Temptation may also be likened to a fire which purifies the good from the least stain, whilst it consumes badly disposed Christians like straw.¹⁰

Temptation, being an incitement to evil, can only spring from an evil cause. God cannot Himself tempt us. He can only allow us to be tempted. For it is not possible that He

¹ *Enarr. in psalm. XC; Sermo II, n. 1.*

² *Id., LX, n. 2: Si in illo nos tentati sumus, in illo nos diabolum superamus . . . agnosce te in illo tentatum, et te in illo agnosce vincentem.*

³ *Sermo II, n. 2, 3.*

⁴ *Id., CXXV, n. 11.*

⁵ *Enarr. in psalm. LV, n. 2; Enarr. in psalm. XXXVI, n. 1.*

⁶ *Ep. CXXX, 5; Si nulla tentatio, jam nulla oratio.*

⁷ *Contra Faustum Manich., lib. XXII, cap. 20.*

⁸ *De Genesi ad litt., lib II, cap. vi.*

⁹ *Enarr. in psalm. LX, n. 3; Enarr. in psalm. LXIX, n. 5.*

¹⁰ *Sermo XCI, n. 4; Enarr. in psalm. CIII; Sermo III, n. 22.*

should directly solicit us to do wrong. *God tempts no one*, says St. James (i. 13). If sometimes we read in Holy Writ that God tempted certain persons, such as Abraham, when He commanded him to sacrifice his son, there is no question here of temptation in the sense of an invitation to sin, but rather as a trial to strengthen faith.¹ The source of real temptation cannot be good.

In fact, the causes of our temptations are, first of all, our depraved nature and concupiscence, and also the devil and the wicked who are his ministers, and lastly the world.

To speak truly, the only real cause of our temptations is the triple concupiscence within us of which St. John speaks. For outward causes would be ineffective if they did not find an accomplice in our depraved nature. The struggle, in reality, is within ourselves and not without, and the most sure means of victory over our temptations is that of interior mortification.

When we have repressed the evil within us there will be little to fear from the empire of the devil and from the world.² This teaching of St. Augustine, so psychological and so true, is of primary importance as regards the practical organization of the spiritual life of each one of us. How much more equitable is this view than those of the Fathers of the desert, who were too prone to see the agency of the devil in all their temptations.

Nevertheless, St. Augustine is careful not to deny this doctrine, but he reduces it to its right proportion. First of all, the devil can tempt nobody without permission from God, and God grants him it either to punish men for their sins or else to try them and bring out their virtue.³ Sometimes God delivers those sinners into the hands of the tempter who give themselves up secretly to lust; but in the ordinary way God permits temptation as a trial and to enable the Christian to overcome the devil.⁴

We should not fear the power which the devil has over us because it is limited and restricted. If, indeed, the devil were able to harm us as much as he desires, neither just man nor Christian would be left on earth. God leaves him free to tempt us as far as it is useful for us to be tried and perfected in virtue; temptation never goes beyond our strength.⁵

¹ *Sermo* LXXI, n. 15; *Sermo* LVII, n. 9; *In Ioan.*, tract. XLIII, n. 6; *Sermo* II, n. 2, 3.

² *Id.*, LVII, n. 9: *Restat conflictus in vobis ipsis. Nullus hostis metuetur extrinsecus: te vince, et mundus est victus. Quis tibi facturus est tentator extraneus, sive diabolus, sive minister diaboli? Non sentis hostem tuum, sed sentis concupiscentiam tuam. Diabolum non vides, sed quid te delectat vides. Vince intus quod sentis. Cf. Sermo* II, n. 3; *De agone christiano*, cap. vi.

³ *De sermone Dom. in monte*, lib. II, n. 34; *Enarr. in psalm.* CIII, *Sermo* IV, n. 7, 8.

⁴ *Enarr. in psalm.* C, n. 12; and XC, n. 2.

⁵ *Enarr. in psalm.* LXI, n. 20; *Enarr. in psalm.* XCIV, n. 9.

The devil cannot do violence to our will and make it consent in spite of itself. Therefore he proceeds by seduction, making use of the unruly inclinations within us. The Fathers of the desert noted well this devilish strategy. Now St. Augustine says that there are two passions, which are like doors through which the evil suggestions of the devil are able to make an entrance into us—viz., covetousness and fear. When he perceives that we covet anything he at once provokes our desire in order to make us fall into evil. In the same way, if anything makes us fearful or sad, he casts into our soul innumerable gloomy thoughts tending to despair.¹ The love of pleasure and the fear of pain are, in short, the two baits which the devil uses to entangle us in his snares.² If he were able to read their hearts he would never tempt those of the faithful who are so sufficiently mortified as to be insensitive to these allurements.³ As it has already been remarked by St. Antony, the devil is only formidable to those who give him a handle by allowing themselves to yield to their passions. Let them inwardly resist their evil inclinations, and their victory over the tempter will be easy.

The devil does not always act directly; he often makes use of the co-operation of evil men who are his agents, by the seduction of whose bad example he would cause the faithful to fall.⁴ If scandals are not enough to move strong souls he seeks to discourage them by criticisms, mockings, calumny, and all kinds of persecutions. If finally these means do not succeed, he prompts his victims to rash judgements and to contemplate their persecutors with bitterness and anger. What artfulness, indeed, does not he employ!⁵

One of the scandals which the devil knows well how to employ to sadden feeble souls is the spectacle of the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the good. At the beginning of the fifth century particularly the stumbling-block for the greater number of Christians was the weakening of the Roman Empire, giving way beneath the onslaughts of the barbarians just at the very time it had become Christian. Was not Providence to blame? And this all the more as the pagans did not hesitate to attribute the ruin of the Empire to its having abandoned the cult of the gods.

St. Augustine wrote his treatise *On the City of God* as an apology for Providence. He showed that the breaking up of the Roman Empire was only a more striking instance of what we see going on around us day by day. Here below the

¹ *Sermo XXXII*, n. 11; *Enarr. in psalm.* XLII, n. 3.

² *Enarr. in psalm.* XXX, *enarr.* II, n. 10. St. Augustine thinks that devils are able to appear with human bodies and to do violence to those whom they tempt. *De civitate Dei*, lib. XV, cap. xxiii.

³ *De Genesi ad litt.*, lib. XII, cap. xvii.

⁴ *Sermo* II, n. 3; *De agone christiano*, cap. 11.

⁵ *Ep.* LXXXVIII, n. 5.

wicked triumph and the good are down-trodden. But this will be changed on the other side of the grave. If our faith were more vivid we should pity the wicked and not be scandalized at their earthly good fortune and we would accept the sorrows of this life in atonement for our faults.¹ "It has pleased divine Providence to prepare for the righteous in the life to come good things which the wicked will not enjoy, and for the wicked evils with which the righteous will not be tormented. As to the good and bad things of this life, Providence has willed that they should be common to both in order that we should not yearn too eagerly for the happiness which the wicked possess in common with others, or that we should shun as shameful evils which the righteous suffer most of the time."² . . .

"And besides, what have the Christians then suffered in this cataclysm (the fall of Rome) which has not been for their good, if they would but consider events with the eye of faith? Let them avow first of all, thinking humbly of the sins which have offended God and prompted Him to fill the world with so many calamities, that although they may not be of the number of the debauched and impious, they are nevertheless not so free from faults as to think themselves undeserving of temporal punishment by way of reparation."³

Finally, the last cause of temptation is the world. The world, in the sense in which the word is here understood, is composed of multitudes who seek by every possible means, even the most wrongful and degrading, to satisfy their carnal appetites, their curiosity, and their ambition.⁴ Those who do not yet belong to it the world strives to seduce by incitement to pleasure, obscene plays, and its enticements to unhealthy curiosity. If we would resist it victoriously, as we should do to beat the devil, we must chastise our bodies and bring them into subjection.⁵ For if our senses are closed to its allurements the world will cease to be a danger for us.

The Christian, then, is surrounded by formidable enemies; therefore he ought to know exactly how to fight them in order not to let them overcome him. First of all, when temptation comes, he must reject it without delay and say, with Christ, to the tempter: *Get thee behind me, Satan* (Matt. iv. 10).⁶ All hesitation is the beginning of defeat. Whilst turning away from evil let him be heedful of turning to Christ. When we feel temptation within, and the tempest

¹ *Enarr. in psalm. XXV*, n. 4; *Sermo de urbis excidio*, n. 5, 9 (P.L. XL, 720, 723).

² *De civitate Dei*, lib. I, cap. viii.

³ *Id.*, lib. I, cap. ix.

⁴ *In epist. Joan. ad Parthos*, tract. II, n. 12.

⁵ *De agone christiano*, cap. vi.

⁶ *In epist. Joan. ad Parthos*, tract. II, n. 14.

risers and the waves roar, and we are shaken as were the Apostles, when they feared to be engulfed in the sea of Genesareth (Matt. viii. 24-25), let us awaken Christ, who seems to sleep; let us pray to Him. Let us remember His words and teaching, and soon He will command the waves to be at peace and there will be a great calm in our souls.¹

In fact, in order to resist temptation, prayer is a necessity; it obtains the grace without which it is impossible for us to conquer. When we triumph over the tempter it is God who upholds us lest we yield, who draws us to Him lest we fall into the trap of the devil, who defends us lest we be wounded. We must not weary, then, in asking His aid when we are instigated to evil.²

To prayer we must add the thought of heaven, the desire of the blissful life of the elect. Resistance to temptation insures and increases our heavenly reward, whilst, on the contrary, consent makes us lose it. And so the more the yearning for the eternal Jerusalem grows in us the stronger we shall be against the tempter.³

The Fathers of the desert also taught that a sense of the presence of God is particularly helpful in repelling evil—above all, impurity. God sees us wherever we are, in the secrecy of our homes as in the public places, in the shadows of darkness as in the brightness of day. "If thou wouldst sin, seek a place where God will not see thee and then do what thou wouldst!"⁴

Finally, fasting is an excellent means of conquering temptation, and it is particularly useful when this is violent. It makes the struggle easier and reduces the force of the passions, and obtains for us the victory by drawing down upon us the divine protection.⁵

V.—ST. AUGUSTINE ON THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER

ST. AUGUSTINE has stated very precisely the conditions attached to the efficacy of prayer. Theologians of the Middle Ages have but reproduced fully his views on the subject.

In order that prayer be unfailingly heard it is not enough that it should be offered with humility, confidence, and perse-

¹ *Sermo* LXIII, n. 2, 3; *Sermo* XXXVIII, n. 10.

² *Enarr. in psalm.* LXXXIX, n. 4; *De gratia et libero arbit.*, n. 8, 9; *Enarr. in psalm.* CXLIII, n. 9; *De civitate Dei*, X, cap. xxii.

³ *Enarr. in psalm.* CXXXVI, n. 22.

⁴ *Sermo* CXXXII, n. 2: *Ipse (Deus) timendus est in publico, ipse in secreto. Procedis, videris, intras, videris; lucerna ardet, videt te; lucerna extincta est, videt te: in cubiculum intras, videt te, in corde versaris, videt te. Ipsum time, illum cui cura est ut videat te; et vel timendo castus esto. Aut si peccare vis, quaere ubi te non videat et jac quod vis.*

⁵ *Sermo* CCX, n. 3.

verance. That which is prayed for must also be not opposed to salvation. For our petitions ought to be addressed to God in the name of our Saviour Jesus. Would it not be a contradiction for God to grant things contrary to salvation in the name of the Saviour?¹

Now, our petitions are opposed to salvation if they are offered for something that is wrong, or for something which, though good in itself, is inexpedient.² The divine Physician would certainly be constrained not to hearken to the sick man who asks for something injurious to health.³ The good things for which we should beseech God are grace and eternal life, compared to which the rest are nothing.⁴ These kinds of supplications are always welcomed by Our Lord provided they are offered *for ourselves*. For—and this is another condition affecting efficacy of prayer—it is for ourselves that we must pray if we would be assured of being heard. We do not always obtain what we ask for others, be they friends or enemies. The promise of Jesus, *Amen, Amen, I say unto you, everything that you ask the Father in My name He will give you* (Joan. xv. 23), should be understood to mean that our personal prayers, and not those that we offer for others, are unfailingly heard.⁵ Those for whom we pray may have bad dispositions, which render our prayers for them of no avail. Prayer for our neighbour is good and commendable, but we must not be disheartened if sometimes it is not effective.

Humble, confident, and persevering prayer, then, made in the name of Jesus our Saviour, in which we ask for ourselves the grace of sanctification and salvation, is always heard. If it should happen that it does not at once obtain what it asks, this is only a postponement and not a refusal: *differtur enim quod petimus non negatur*.⁶ God, for reasons known to Him, awaits a more opportune moment to grant our request; but grant it He will.⁷

¹ In Joan. Evang. tract. CII, 1: *Non peti in nomine Salvatoris quidquid petitur contra rationem salutis.*

² *Id.*, tract. LXXIII, 1, 2. St. Paul, for example, was not granted protection from the attacks of the angel of Satan (2 Cor. xii, 8).

³ *Id.*, 3: *Nemo enim medicus quid pro suo, quid contra suam salutem poscat secretis, et ideo contraria facientis non facit voluntatem ut ipse constituit.*

⁴ *Id.*, tract. CII, n. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 1: *Exaudiantur omnes sancti pro seip[s]is, non autem pro omnibus exaudiantur vel amici, vel inimici, vel quibuscumque aliis, quia non utcumque dictum est DABIT sed DABIT VOBIS.*

⁶ *Id.*, tract. LXXIII, n. 4.

⁷ *Id.*, tract. CII, n. 1: *Quandam enim non negantur, sed ut congruo dentur tempore differuntur.*

CHAPTER IX

CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM IN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CEN- TURIES—ST. AUGUSTINE AND DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

ST. AUGUSTINE, as we have seen, has drawn up the principle of ascetic theology; his spiritual terminology and his teaching on the mounting of the soul towards God have remained and become classical. He also, together with the pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, laid the foundations of mystical theology and perpetuated formulæ which have become landmarks to guide souls in the byways of spirituality. It is, moreover, a curious coincidence to find that both St. Augustine and pseudo-Dionysius, in this delicate enterprise, have borrowed expressions from Neoplatonism.

From the end of the second century and throughout the whole of the third, as we have seen,¹ Neoplatonism sought for man a means of purification and union with God. It attributed great purifying value to knowledge and asceticism, and considered that the soul, freed by means of these from the trammels of sense, was able to rise by a kind of pantheism to the ecstatic contemplation of things divine.

Towards the middle of the fourth century until the beginning of the sixth the Neoplatonic movement came in contact with Christianity, and, in order that it might cease to be a danger, efforts were made to reconcile it with the teaching of Christ.

On the one side, those recently converted to Christianity, like St. Augustine before his baptism, tried to find orthodox terms and even theories in Neoplatonism to express their new belief. On the other side, and this was the case with the pseudo-Dionysius, it was hoped to bring to naught the attacks of Neoplatonism against Catholic dogma by bringing out points of agreement and by Christianizing inconsistencies as much as possible. This is what St. Thomas, later on, did with Aristotle. This apologetic work seemed to them the more urgently needed in that Proclus, the last leader of the Neoplatonic school (411-485), had contested Christian teaching.

It will be of interest for us to see how Neoplatonism became Christianized and provided Christian mysticism with some of its terminology.

¹ See Chapter III.

I.—CONTEMPLATION ACCORDING TO ST. AUGUSTINE

It was especially in the seclusion of Cassiacum and during the two years immediately following his baptism that St. Augustine made use of Neoplatonism in his writings. The ascetic theories which he then advanced seem very different from those of the preceding chapter. The religious feeling is intense; the pious and loving soul of St. Augustine is entirely brought out there; but the thought possesses an accentuated philosophical character.¹ There is not as yet that wholly Biblical thought saturated with sacred doctrine which we so admire in the priest and Bishop of Hippo. At the end of his life, in his *Retractations*, St. Augustine regrets the enthusiasm of his youth for philosophers, and retracts a certain number of their theories which he had accepted and incorporated in his writings,² after having corrected them, however, so far as he thought necessary in order to reconcile them with the faith.

It would seem that it was the mystical state and chiefly ecstatic contemplation which above all attracted St. Augustine's attention whilst yet a neophyte. And, indeed, his wonderful conversion was so perfect that it raised his soul rapidly to supernatural heights. Are not the transports of Ostia³ a proof that St. Augustine, still a recent convert, already tasted the joy of contemplation?

And as he found in the theory of Neoplatonic contemplation, which he knew so well, the elements of a philosophy suitable to the state of his own soul, he did not hesitate to make use of it, correcting it so as to provide the outlines of a provisional and imperfect mystical theology.

In conformity with Neoplatonic teaching, the young Augustine considered that true happiness here below, the highest wisdom and perfection of man, was to be found in the knowledge of God. He thought that virtue was inseparable from knowledge, and that it was impossible to be learned without being virtuous; for there was a necessary link between light and well-being: to know had a moral and beatifying effect.⁴ Man's happiness, the object of his life,

¹ See particularly the works here cited: *De beata vita*; *De ordine libri duo*; *Soliloquiorum libri duo*; *De immortalitate animae*; *De quantitate animæ*; *De moribus Eccl. Catholice et de moribus Manich.*; *De genesi contra Manichæos*; *De libero arbitrio*. These treatises are to be found in Migne, P.L. vol. XXXII, except the treatise *De Genesi contra Manichæos*, which is in vol. XXXIV.

² Cf. *Retract.*, I, cap. i to v.

³ *Confessions*, IX, cap. x.

⁴ *De beata vita*, n. 1-4; *Soliloquiorum*, I, cap. i, n. 2. St. Augustine in his *Retractations* (lib. I, cap. ii, iv; cap. xiv, n. 2) recognizes that

then, consists in knowing God more and more completely. This idea of beatitude and of the end of man agrees with St. Augustine's conception—inspired by Platonism—of God.

God is the source and first cause of all things. He is, as creator, the origin of being, as intellectual light the genesis of truth, as supreme well-being the beginning of all goodness, all holiness, and all happiness.¹ Man's perfection does not consist, as Plotinus says, in identifying himself with God, but in uniting himself to Him and in participating in His light and goodness. The great means of union with God is knowledge.

But there are two ways of arriving at the knowledge of God: by reason and by contemplation.

Rational knowledge, however noble, is imperfect. Do not let us imagine, however, that St. Augustine was an agnostic. Far from that. Reason is able to demonstrate the existence of God. It may also know, in a certain measure, His attributes, especially if it combines with intellectual research the moral qualities of the heart.² But our knowledge of God is of necessity limited. We are powerless to understand God and to express Him in language. God is incomprehensible. "He is ineffable; we can say more easily what He is not than what He is: *Deus ineffabilis est, facilius dicimus quid non sit quam quid sit.*" He is transcendent and so much beyond us that in those things which we think and say concerning Him we fall far below the truth.

So much so that the best knowledge we have of Him is to know that we cannot truly know Him, and still less say what He is.³ It is the famous Neoplatonic principle of the knowledge of God by negation with which St. Augustine is here inspired and which St. Dionysius pushes still further.

There is, then, for man a knowledge other than rational knowledge of God; and this he obtains by means of contemplation.

this doctrine is imperfect. To be happy, he says, it is necessary not only to know God, but also to hope in Him and love Him. Moreover, it is only in heaven and not here below that we shall be happy. In *The City of God* (lib. viii, cap. iii to v), in which the Neoplatonic teachings are so strongly Christianized, St. Augustine approves of this definition of a wise man attributed to Plato: *The wise man is he who imitates, knows, and loves God and finds his happiness in participating in His life.* This is assuredly an exact definition of a perfect Christian.

¹ *De civitate Dei*, lib. VIII, cap. x, n. 2; cap. iv. Cf. Portalié, *Dict. de Théol. Cath.* art. S. Aug., p. 2328.

² Cf. *Ep.* CLXII, II, 2; *De libero arbitrio*, II, cap. v. to xv. St. Augustine insists on the exercise of the will and moral dispositions in order to discover truth. Cf. Portalié, *id.*, p. 2332 ff.

³ *Enarr. in psalm.* LXXXV, n. 12. Cf. CXXXIV, n. 4-6; In *Joan.*, tract. XIII, n. 5; XXIII, n. 9; *De ordine*, II, n. 47; *De doctrina christiana*, I, n. 6.

In order to arrive at contemplation the soul requires far more moral preparation than for the rational knowledge of God. The Neoplatonists attached the highest importance to this preparation. Enlightened by Christian faith, St. Augustine also insists on it. He knows that contemplation is entirely a spiritual phenomenon, altogether divine; the soul cannot reach it without at the outset freeing itself from the senses and from all that is of the body, so that it may retire within itself and receive the divine light.

And, first of all, the condition needful for the contemplation and knowledge of God is to desire Him ardently. The soul must think of Him unceasingly and learn the way to reach Him. It must concentrate every effort and activity upon the pursuit of true wisdom, which consists in the knowledge of the sovereign goodness. It will be indifferent towards everything else. Divine wisdom, in fact, will have no half-measures; it must have the whole man.¹

There have been Neoplatonists who abandoned everything and even lived in solitude in the desert for the sake of knowing God.

In the first days of his conversion St. Augustine passionately desired to know and contemplate God. He asked for this grace in that beautiful Platonic prayer at the beginning of the *Soliloquies*:

"O God, creator of the universe, grant me first of all to pray well, then render me worthy to be heard and deliver me . . . O God, Father of truth and wisdom, of the true and sovereign life; Father of bliss and goodness and beauty; Father of the light of understanding and of the awakening and enlightenment of our spirit; Father of promises which encourage us to come back to Thee. I invoke Thee, O God of Truth, in whom and by whom and through whom all truth is true; O Wisdom in whom, by whom, and through whom all that is wise is wise; true God and sovereign life in whom, by whom, and through whom all that lives participates in the true and sovereign life; O Beatitude in whom, by whom, and through whom all who are happy are happy; O Goodness and Beauty in whom, by whom, and through whom all that is good and beautiful is made good and beautiful; O Light of Knowledge in whom, by whom, and through whom all intelligible light is made known;² O God, whose kingdom is the world our senses do not know. . . . O God, to turn from Thee is to fall, to return to Thee is to rise, to rest in Thee is to be stable. O God, to depart from Thee is to die, to come back to Thee is to live again, to dwell in Thee is to have life. O God, whom no one can lose without erring,

¹ *Soliloquiorum*, I, cap. xii, 20, 21; xiii, 22, 23.

² Certain writers have wrongly concluded from this and some other passages (*Solil.*, I, cap. vi, viii) that St. Augustine was an ontologist.

whom no one can seek unless he be called, whom no one can find without purification. O God, to abandon Thee is to perish, to desire Thee is to love Thee, to see Thee is to possess Thee. O God, faith leads us to Thee, hope gives us confidence in Thee, charity unites us to Thee. . . .

"That is why I love but Thee, I exist in Thee alone, I seek only Thee, Thee only I desire to serve, because Thou alone must be my master; I desire to belong to Thee. . . . Drive vanity far from me, that I may know Thee. Tell me in which direction I must look to see Thee, and I hope to fulfil all that Thou commandest.

"O Father, enable me to seek Thee and preserve me from error. In my seeking let nothing but Thee come before me. If indeed I desire nothing but Thee; O Father, help me to find Thee. And if there be in me some superfluous desire do Thou deign to strip me of it Thyself, and thus enable me to see Thee."¹

The soul that is desirous of knowing or contemplating God must resolutely ascend the seven steps of preparation, and so by purification raise itself up to the highest good. These seven steps correspond, according to the Platonic theory, to the seven activities of the soul of which the greatness of man consists. These activities are: *Animation of the body, sensibility, thought, virtue, the peace of the soul* which virtue gives, *entrance into light*, and *contemplation (contemplatio)*.²

The lowest activity of the soul makes itself manifest by the *vegetative life* which it infuses into the body, then comes the *sense life* which we have in common with the animals, and finally the *intellectual life* proper to man.

To reach contemplation the soul must be raised above all that is sensible and material. The Neoplatonists explained this necessity by their dualistic and pantheistic theories. They thought the body to be an evil principle which imprisoned and contaminated the soul. The latter, which was the divine element, must by means of asceticism separate itself as much as possible from the body and loosen its bonds to return by ecstasy to the divinity whence it came.

St. Augustine rejects this interpretation founded on such gross errors. For him the soul which seeks to approach God must be drawn away from matter and become spiritualized as soon as possible, if it may be so expressed, because God is an incorporeal being. Augustine, as long as he was engulfed in the life of sensuality, previous to his conversion, was not able to conceive the idea of a being without a body. It was

¹ *Solil.*, I, cap. i, 2-6 (P.L. XXXII, 869-872). Another work entitled *Liber Soliloquiorum animae ad Deum* is sometimes attributed to St. Augustine. It is to be found in Migne's *Patrology* (P.L. XL, 863-898). It belongs to the Middle Ages.

² *De quantitate animae*, n. 79. The description of these activities is given in Nos. 70-76.

the philosophy of Plato which revealed to him the existence of spiritual beings.¹ To rise above sense and to restrain the imagination, which is an inward sense, are both necessary in order to form some conception of God, who is a pure spirit. The imagination provides our intelligence with sensible images, but all that is thus perceptible is limited, has a form, is imperfect and perishable. But God is without limit and without form; He is perfect and eternal. Also, "when thou thinkest of God," St. Augustine recommends, "if some sensible and corporeal idea comes to thy spirit, drive it away, push it back, deny it, despise it, reject it, flee from it!"² All that which comes from sense is absolutely unfit to make us know and contemplate God, a being essentially supersensible.³

The intelligence is no more able than the senses or imagination to lead us to the contemplation of God; we have seen how rational knowledge is powerless to make us truly grasp the supreme First Cause.

The soul, then, must rise to the fourth degree of its preparation, which is that of virtue and of moral effort.

It is at this point that the purification of man, aspiring to contemplation, truly begins to operate. He must detach himself from riches, honours, and earthly pleasures to follow wholly the inspirations of goodness, to keep his heart pure, and to give to his body only that care strictly needed by health. For to see God the eyes must be perfectly clear, which means a soul without stain, purified by detachment from all that is perishable.⁴ He must also love our Lord, for the best way to know Him is to love Him; only His friends are able to enter intimately into His secrets.⁵ Above all, he must be preserved from pride, the great obstacle in the way of finding truth. But the soul will not reach this perfection without struggle and without anguish; the fear of death will provide for it the needful stimulant to tear it from things of sense and enable it to go to God.⁶

Having achieved this purification, the soul reaches the fifth degree, which is that of tranquillity. It becomes wrapped in a peaceful joy. It has curbed the passions, but is still anxious to insure victory. It feels great calm and aspires with confidence to realize the reward of its endeavour, which is the contemplation of truth.⁷

¹ *Confessions*, VI, 3.

² *Ep.* CXX, n. 13; *Cf. De Trinitate*, VIII, n. 3.

³ We must note, nevertheless, that certain mystic phenomena *other than contemplation*, such as ecstasy and visions, may be produced by images. The prophetic visions of Isaias (ch. vi), of Ezechiel (i-ii), and of the *Apocalypse* (i, iv) are phenomena of this kind. But the images must come from God and not from the imagination of man.

⁴ *De quant. animae*, n. 73; *Solil.*, I, cap. v, 12, 13; x, 17.

⁵ *De moribus Eccl. Cath.*, I, cap. xxv, n. 47; *De Genesi contra Manich.*, I, cap. II, n. 4.

⁶ *De quant. animae*, n. 73.

⁷ *Id.*, n. 74.

But before the soul fully enjoys this great happiness, in a sense it *enters into* the divine light, which is the sixth degree of preparation. It, so to speak, tests its sight, to be certain that its eyes are pure and healthful enough to contemplate the sovereign truth; for if its vision be not pure and clear the soul could not stand the brightness of the heavenly light; it would be so dazzled and blinded that it might turn from God and go back to the dark regions of sinful pleasure.¹

But when the preparation is complete and the soul has reached the summit of this moral ladder the *contemplation* and *vision* of truth (*contemplatio et visio veritatis*) is brought about.² The soul, thus arriving at the seventh and last degree, there establishes its dwelling-place (*mansio*). Henceforth it is in a permanent state, not that contemplation is then unceasing—which is not possible in this life—but because there is no other resting-place to reach. God is its abode and country,³ of whom it takes sweet cognisance.

The first mark of contemplation is the suspension of the faculties of the soul, which become bound. Everything consists in the simple seeing of the soul, which is plunged in the celestial light, and which, without help of word or image, meditates on God in a wholly intellectual way. It is a kind of ecstasy by which the intellectual vision of God is procured and by which God communes directly with the soul.⁴

The soul, in this state, tastes a joy which it cannot describe.

"In the intellectual vision and contemplation of truth," says St. Augustine, "what joys belong to the soul, how does it rejoice in the sovereign and only true good, what eternal serenity does it inhale, what can I tell of it? Some great and incomparable souls have, as far as it was fitting, portrayed these wonders, and we know that they have seen them and that they see them still."⁵

The contemplation of supreme goodness discloses the vanity of earthly things and explains the disillusionment of the sacred writer proclaiming the nothingness of everything under the sun (Eccles. i. 2). In comparison with infinite beauty, all earth's beauty and delight are naught but ugliness and disenchantment.⁶

The truths of faith are shown to the soul in so bright a daylight, and become so evident that it seems to have known nothing before, so small was the knowledge of them compared to that which comes to it with contemplation. The certainty with respect to these truths, and especially with

¹ *De quant. animae*, n. 75.

² *Ibid.*, n. 76.

³ *De quant. animae*, n. 2; *Propriam quamdam habitationem animae ac patriam Deum ipsum credo esse a quo creata est.*

⁴ *Cf. Confessions*, IX, 10.

⁵ *De quantitate animae*, n. 76.

⁶ *Ibid.* *Cf. De ordine*, II, n. 51.

regard to Christ, becomes, furthermore, so strong that it would be easier for the soul to doubt the movement of the sun in the heavens than to refuse them its absolute adherence.¹

Finally, the soul, in its desire totally to be united to the sovereign truth, will look upon death, which it so much dreaded before, as the highest gain. It wishes to be completely freed from the bonds which attach it to the body and to fly to heaven to the vision of supreme goodness, without cloud or interruption.²

In the chapter of the *Confessions* in which St. Augustine speaks of the rapture that he had at Ostia in speaking of heaven with his mother St. Monica, are found, described in fascinating language, the progressive purification of the soul mounting upwards to contemplation, and of contemplation itself :

"Shortly before the day on which Thy servant (Monica) was to quit this world, a day unknown to us but known to Thee, O Lord, it happened, I am convinced through Thy hidden providence, that she and I were found alone, leaning against a window looking out on the garden of our house at Ostia, where, far from the crowd, after the fatigues of a long journey, we were preparing to cross the sea, and there with unspeakable sweetness we communed together, and, forgetful of the past, our whole being was borne towards that which lay before us, and we sought by the truth of this present life, which is Thyself, O Lord, to know what the eternal life of Thy saints must be, which eye of man hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart understood.

"We opened wide our hearts to draw in the waters from Thy heavenly fountain; from that fountain of life which is in Thee, so that we were filled thence after our capacity, and were able to have some idea of what that life sublime must be. And thus our communing led us to conclude that the pleasures of sense and of the body, no matter how intense and how seductive, when placed beside the joys of that other life, were not only not to be compared to it, but were not even worthy of mention; being then uplifted more and more by the fire of our desire, we passed beyond earthly things to the heavens whence the sun and moon and stars send forth their light upon the world. And then we rose still higher by our inward thoughts of Thee, speaking of Thee and wondering at Thy works; and then we came to our own souls, and,

¹ *De quantitate animae*, n. 76.

² We may find in this ascending of the soul towards contemplation the three operations, purification, illumination, and union, in which, according to modern writers, is comprised the whole spiritual life. Nevertheless it would be incorrect to say that St. Augustine had formulated this classic theory such as we know it. His point of view is different.

passing beyond, we reached that region of inexhaustible abundance where Thou dost feed Israel eternally with the food of truth; and where life is Wisdom itself, by whom was made all that is and has been and will be, whilst It Itself has not been made, but is now what it has been and will be; or, to speak more truly, not as it has been or will be, but rather as it is, because it is eternal; for, indeed, that which has been and will be is not eternal. And while we were thus speaking and yearning ardently to reach this highest Wisdom, we seemed to touch it for an instant with the beatings of our hearts. Then, leaving there in heaven these first-fruits of the spirit, we returned with a sigh to language, to the word which finds in our lips its beginning and its end. . . .

"And so we said: He who would silence within him the tumults of the flesh and close his eyes to the things of earth and water and air and firmament and would hush the promptings of his own soul so that it might not stay to dwell upon itself, and would strip his thoughts of every memory and image and forget language, words, and all things that can change (yet if he hearkened to these things would they cry out and say, 'We are not of ourselves, but made by Him who lives eternally'); if, then, he should no longer listen to these creatures after they had bid him turn his ear to their creator; if to such an one God Himself should speak no longer through His creatures but Himself, so that His word might be heard, not by fleshly tongue, nor by an angel's voice, nor by the noise of thunder, nor the language of figure or of sign, but uttered even by Him whom we love in His creatures, without their mediation, in a manner wholly spiritual, like the spiritual contact which for one instant we had experienced in our thoughts when they were carried up to heaven itself and the eternal Wisdom subsisting unchangeable midst all created things; if, then, such an ecstasy should continue; if all other visions infinitely beneath it were to fade away, and if this contemplation alone should absorb and engulf in inward joy him to whom it was vouchsafed, so that life eternal was like to that short transport after which we had sighed so much, would not it be the fulfilment of the words of the Gospel: 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord' (Matt. xxv. 21)?"¹

II.—THE MYSTICAL THEOLOGY OF DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE¹

LIKE St. Augustine, Dionysius maintains that the imagination (*φαντασία*) is not able to lead us to the knowledge of God. Every corporeal image, everything that comes through the senses, can only hinder our efforts to form an idea of the Divinity.² Moreover, we must condemn the material and ignorant who take as literal the metaphors and anthropomorphisms used in holy Scripture in speaking of God. For is it not impossible to believe that God, for example, can be angry, repent, sleep, or awaken? And ought we not to avoid such language which can thus lead to error?³

There are but two ways by which man may know God: reason (*λόγος*) and mystical contemplation (*μυστικὸν θέαμα*).⁴ The rational knowledge of God pertains to demonstrative or philosophical theology (*θεολογία ἀποδεικτική*). Mystical theology, which is the higher, attains to the knowledge of God by a kind of supernatural and inexpressible intuition. It is for this reason called mystical, which signifies mysterious.⁵

To make an examination of these two theologies is to explain the mystical teaching of St. Dionysius.

Reason gives us a certain knowledge of God, but this knowledge is so imperfect that it can scarcely be properly so called. St. Dionysius pushes far the great Neoplatonic principle of God's absolute transcendence and His incomprehensibility and ineffability.

In order to form some idea of God, reason pursues a course either of *affirmation* or *negation*.

It affirms that God, the creator of all beings, possesses all the qualities of creatures; He is wise, powerful, good, beautiful, and He is the truth. All the good that we can say of created beings belongs with greater right to God. In this sense, every title can be given Him. This is *affirmative theology*⁶ (*θεολογία καταφατική*).

But—and this is the second stage—reason takes cognizance that the Lord excels in all the qualities of creatures. All the

¹ SOURCES.—Chiefly *De divinis nominibus* in which the author treats of the names which holy Scripture gives to God; *De mystica theologia* which concerns mystical contemplation; *Letters* addressed by Dionysius to sundry correspondents; *De coelesti hierarchia*, on the nine choirs of angels, and *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* explaining Christian rites, both contain some references to mysticism. All these works are to be found in *Greek Patrology*, Vol. III.

² *De divinis nominibus*, I, 5.

³ *Ep.* IX, 1, 5, 6.

⁴ *De myst. theol.*, I, 1.

⁵ *Ep.* IX, 1.

⁶ *De myst. theol.*, III; *De divin. nomin.*, I, 6; II, 3, 11.

titles which we give to Him, all the conceptions we form of Him, express Him so incompletely and so imperfectly that it is as true to say that they do not as that they do apply to Him. We know better what God is not than what He is. Furthermore, in order to know Him truly we must begin by negation, and reject all ideas we may have of Him; we must form the knowledge that we desire to have of Him, like the carving of a statue, in which one part and then another of the marble is cut away until the wished-for figure is reached.¹ This is *negative theology* (θεολογία ἀποφατική).

God is therefore *unnameable* (ἀνώνυμος); no name will fit Him completely. He is *unknowable* (ἀγνωστός) in the sense that no conception of Him can make us truly know Him.²

Ought we, then, to resign ourselves to total lack of the knowledge of God? No; for negative theology does not destroy affirmative, but it teaches us that God exceeds all that we are able to deny or affirm concerning Him (ὑπὲρ πάντων καὶ ἀφαίρεσιν καὶ θέσιν).³

When we say that God is good we apply to Him the idea of goodness drawn from creatures, but God is not good in the same way as are creatures; He is good in a much more perfect and transcendent manner (ὑπεροχικῶς).⁴ So much so that it might be said, in this sense, that God is not good.

Bossuet expounded clearly this famous theory of the knowledge of God by negation which it would be so easy to abuse. "To know God," he said, "we must deny in a certain sense all we think and all we say of Him, not because they are false, for it would be impious and atheistic to deny that God is holy, eternal and omnipotent, that He is He who is, is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in these three persons one God. We do not, then, deny these things in a sense that they are false, please God! but we reject them, so to speak, as ill-proportioned to and scarcely befitting the immense perfection of the divine Being. For whatever effort we make to know Him, however sublime the conceptions of Him which are presented to our minds, or the thoughts we try to have respecting Him, we deny that they are in any way commensurate with His high and impenetrable majesty."⁵

Dionysius cannot be accused of being an agnostic; this would be unjust.⁶ He cannot, however, be called an intel-

¹ *De myst. theol.*, II, IV, V.

² *De divin. nomin.*, I, 1, 5.

³ *De myst. theol.*, I, 2; *Ep.* I. Cf. Tixeront, III, p. 194. Similar ideas concerning the incomprehensibility of God and the knowledge of Him by negation are to be found in the writings of St. Gregory Nazianzen, *oratio*, XXVIII (P.G. XXXVI).

⁴ *Ep.* I; *De coel. hierarch.*, II. See the commentary of St. Thomas, S. T., 1a Pars, *Quaest.* XIII, art. 12.

⁵ *Instruction on States of Prayer*, second treatise, Paris, 1897, pp. 50, 51.

⁶ Dionysius admits that it is possible to know God by reason and by the analogy of creatures.

lectualist in the modern sense of the word. For, according to him, the true knowledge of God can only be obtained here below through contemplation, and it is the mystics who have a right conception of the divine Being.

Mystical theology, then, according to Dionysius, is superior to demonstrative theology in that it penetrates further into the knowledge of God. It no longer relies on reason, which seeks truth so laboriously, but on the very light of God, which in contemplation enlightens and instructs the soul.¹ Moreover, this theology cannot be learnt from books; contemplation is a free gift, the fruit of divine inspiration.

It need hardly be said that the soul which desires to reach contemplation requires preparation.

Prayer above all things is necessary. It is by prayer that we approach God. When we pray it is not so much that God comes down to us as that we raise ourselves to Him. Prayer is like a luminous chain which binds earth to heaven; we have only to take hold of it to be lifted up on high and to contemplate God.² For it cannot be repeated too often, the contemplation of God and the union of the soul with Him are supernatural realities beyond human strength and capacity. Prayer only is able to obtain them for us.

To prayer must be joined effort towards purification. This needful purification is at once moral and intellectual. The soul must separate itself from creatures and be preserved from voluptuousness,³ like Moses, who, before going up Mount Sinai and entering the mysterious cloud, separated himself from his people in order to sanctify himself. It must finally strip itself of the imagination of sense and of imperfect ideas which can only hinder it in its desire to reach contemplation. The soul thus prepared will enter into the divine light and become united to God in contemplation.

"Do thou, O well-beloved Timothy," says Dionysius, "in thy desire to arrive at mystical contemplation, compel thyself to be disentangled from the senses, and from the workings of the mind, and from all that is sensible and intelligible, and from all that is and all that is not, to the end that thou mayst raise thyself by *nescience* (*ἀγνοῦσθῆς*), as far as it is possible to do so, to union with Him who is above all being and all knowledge; that is to raise thyself, by absolute detachment from thyself and all things, stripped of everything and loosed from every hindrance, to that beam of supernatural bright-

¹ This Dionysian theory of the knowledge of God by mystical contemplation resembles that of St. John of the Cross.

² *De divin. nomen.* III, 1.

³ *De eccles. hier.*, I, 3.

ness coming forth from the divine obscurity" (θείου σκότους ἀκτίνα).¹

Contemplation itself, according to Dionysius, consists in three things: entrance into the divine obscurity, complete suspension of the faculties or mystical silence, and finally the vision of God and union with Him.

These are the same elements as those of Augustinian contemplation; but the thought of Dionysius is more involved and his terminology much more inspired by Neoplatonism.

The soul worthy of contemplation, purified from faults and stripped of the allurements of sense and of creatures, enters into the divine obscurity, brighter than light (ὑπέρφωτος γνόφος). There, blind and nescient from the rational standpoint, it begins to see and to know (ἰδεῖν καὶ γινῶναι) that which is beyond both sight and knowledge of the reason, even that which we cannot see or know by the intelligence—that is God.²

This divine obscurity (θείος γνόφος), Dionysius explains, is that inaccessible light in which, according to Scripture, is the dwelling-place of God (1 Tim. vi. 16).

It cannot be gazed upon without supernatural help on account of the dazzling brightness; only he may penetrate who has deserved to see and know God. It was thus that St. Paul was able to know God, although he himself says that God is above all knowledge and comprehension, that His ways cannot be found nor His judgements fathomed, that His gifts are unspeakable (Rom. xi. 33) and His peace passing all understanding (Phil. iv. 7).³ This bright obscurity brings to mind that which enveloped Mount Sinai when God promulgated there His law. "The mountain was on fire, and the flames arose into the midst of the heavens amongst the clouds and darkness and obscurity."⁴ The Psalmist also tells us "cloud and shadow are round about the Lord" and that He "has placed his dwelling-place in the darkness."⁵

Why does Dionysius call darkness an inaccessible light (γνόφος ἐστὶ τὸ ἀπρόσιτον φῶς),⁶ and how can the obscurity of contemplation be brightness to the soul?⁷

¹ *De myst. theol.*, I, 1. Here again we find the three well-known acts—purification, entrance into the heavenly light, and union with God. These are not the three classic steps of spiritual life as propounded by ascetic theology, for the Areopagite has in view only one who is drawn to mystical contemplation. But it is evident that the distinction of the three ways of supernatural life owes its origin to St. Augustine's and St. Dionysius's theory of Christian contemplation. The doctrine of the three stages—purification, illumination, and union—which lead to contemplation, would little by little be generalized and adapted to ordinary Christian life.

² *De myst. theol.*, II.

³ *Ep.* V.

⁴ Deut. iv, 11.

⁵ Psalm xcvi, 2; Psalm xvii, 12. *De myst. theol.*, I, 2.

⁶ *Ep.* V.

⁷ *De myst. theol.*, I, 1.

Perhaps such strange terminology is but a simple reminiscence or adaptation of the Scriptural passages just cited; or does Dionysius here reproduce Neoplatonic expressions?

His commentators have endeavoured to explain. Some say that the divine light that surrounds God is so brilliant that the soul is blinded and plunged in darkness, as our eyes looking at the sun become dazzled and see nothing. But if it be thus, how can the contemplation of God be accomplished? Others prefer to think that the mystic shadows signify the total suppression of the activities of the soul which takes place during contemplation. The soul is in ecstasy (*ἑκστασις*) and is insensible to everything around it; the most profound silence is produced within it. Dionysius also calls this darkness the darkness of silence (*γνόφος σιγῆς*).¹ Finally, others again consider that the darkness signifies the knowledge of God by negation. This negative knowledge of God, this nescience, if one may so express it, is the darkness of the mind. And this darkness becomes bright because in contemplation it is the divine light which enlightens the soul and makes it know that which the reason was unable truly to grasp.²

The second character of contemplation is, to use a modern expression, *the binding of the powers of the soul*. The faculties of the soul cease to be exercised the moment it enters the luminous darkness; it is the suspension of the activity of the senses and of the working of the intelligence. The mind becomes totally voiceless (*ὁλος ἄφωνος ἔσται*) and the soul completely silent.³ Nevertheless, this great calm is not passiveness. Dionysius calls the silence of contemplation a silence which reveals mysteries (*κρυφιομύστης σιγή*).⁴ God communicates His truth to the soul without the sound of words, and it must open out actively in order to receive it.

Finally, contemplation effects the direct vision of God and the immediate union of the soul with Him. It is a mysterious and ineffable phenomenon which cannot be described. Dionysius multiplies expressions to convey some idea of this state.

It is the super-rational knowledge of God (*ὑπὲρ νοῦν γινώσκεται*) operating directly without the mediation of any creature or any idea.⁵ This knowledge is most perfect; it is the vision of God (*ἰδεῖν θεόν*), a contemplation of Himself (*θεά*) in the divine light.⁶

¹ *De myst. theol.*, I, 1.

² Cf. *Annotationes Corderii ad Myst. Theol.* (P.G. III, 1005).

³ *De myst. theol.*, III.

⁴ *De myst. theol.*, I, 1. The interpretation, however, of the obscure word *κρυφιομύστης* is not certain.

⁵ *Ep.* I.

⁶ *De myst. theol.*, II.

The soul is, then, closely united to God, for contemplation is also a union with God (*θεία ἔνωσις*).¹ This union is most intimate, it is wonderful; for our mind and reasoning, however powerful they may be, are of themselves incapable of producing it.² It is through this union with God and this assimilation with Him (*πρὸς θεὸν . . . ἀφομοίωσις τε καὶ ἔνωσις*) that we become deified and return to the sovereign unity, the principle and end of all things, from whence we came.³

This Neoplatonic theory of the return of beings to unity possesses, in the mind of Dionysius, a most orthodox sense. God is the Alpha and Omega of all things; created beings will return to Him without being absorbed or lost in Him. The Christian in particular returns to God by contemplation, to be united with Him and to participate in His life; in one word, to become divine, deified, but not to become God. Nevertheless, in the Middle Ages several of the commentators of Dionysius misunderstood this doctrine of the return of beings to God, and fell into pantheistic errors, proclaiming that the soul, in returning to this union with God, became so identified with Him as to lose its personality.

This mystical union between God and the soul thus brought about by contemplation is effected by love. Divine love is ecstatic (*ἐκστατικὸς ὁ θεῖος ἔρως*); it prevents those who possess it from belonging to themselves. They are God's, whom they love. Contemplation, therefore, and union with God are the triumph of love.⁴

¹ *De divin. nomin.*, III, 1.

² *Id.*, I, 1.

³ *De eccl. hier.*, I, 3; *De myst. theol.*, I, 3.

⁴ *De divin. nomin.*, IV, 13; *De eccl. hier.*, I, 3.

CHAPTER X
CHRIST IN SPIRITUALITY
DURING THE CHRISTOLOGICAL
CONTROVERSIES OF THE
FIFTH AND SIXTH CENTURIES—
THE EUCHARIST—THE
CULTUS OF THE VIRGIN MARY,
MOTHER OF GOD

WE have noticed how greatly the personality of Christ preponderated in primitive spirituality. Jesus Himself, it is remembered, declared that to be perfect it was necessary to abandon all and to follow Him; He is the vine to which we, the branches, must be united in order to receive supernatural life. St. Paul and the first Christians had a very lively sense of the presence of Christ in them, and they found in Him the best nourishment for their piety. The exhortations of Jesus that we should renounce all earthly things, His fast of forty days in the desert, were most effective stimulants to many Christians to live in solitude after the peace which came with Constantine.

But at the beginning of the fourth century the controversies on the Trinity, and later on Christology, placed the person of Christ, His mysterious union with human nature, His perfections, His mission of redemption, and His sanctification of souls, in a new light. The attention of the devout was directed with a new love towards Jesus, the model of achievement of all perfection and the source of all holiness.

St. Augustine, whose powerful genius embraced almost every Christian dogma, did not fail to dwell deeply on the mystery of the incarnation. He expressed the Christological doctrine with a precision of language which was scarcely more than reproduced by St. Leo the Great in his magnificent dogmatic homilies. When he preached on the feast of the Nativity, or when he replied by letter to a question put to him on the union of the Word with human nature, St. Augustine, having explained the dogma, deduced therefrom the effects of it for the Christian life, and evolved thoughts from the motives of the incarnation which were to nourish the piety of future generations of Christians. After him, St. Cyril of Alexandria, the great champion of the personal unity of Christ and of the divine maternity of Mary, at the Council of Ephesus in 431; then St. Leo the Great; and many others have expounded for

the faithful many practical lessons springing from Christological dogma. After the Council of Chalcedon in 451, when Eutyches was condemned, and the distinction between the two natures, the divine and human, in Christ, was defined, spirituality was for a lengthy period inspired by Christology.

I.—CHRIST'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRISTIANS— THE CHURCH IS CHRIST'S MYSTICAL BODY

ST. AUGUSTINE, in speaking of the relationship between Christ and the faithful, made use of the Pauline metaphor of the human body. The faithful Christian is a member of the body of Christ.

The eternal Word, infinite, without ceasing to be what He is, being subject neither to change nor alteration, took human nature. He united Himself to a body and soul in such a manner as to become man without ceasing to be God. He is God-man, being both truly God and truly man.¹ In Him there is but one person, the person of the Word. Christ is thus the only real mediator between God and man. He is at the same time like unto God and like unto man; He is able, therefore, to approach God on behalf of man, and to treat with man on behalf of God.² In the same way, Jesus is the Great High Priest, through whom the divine justice is satisfied by humanity.³

In uniting Himself *hypostatically* to human nature the Word is also united *spiritually* to each one of us. For Christians are incorporated with Christ by Baptism, and above all by the Eucharist; they have become His members.

The incarnate Word has thus two bodies: His natural and physical body which He took in the virginal womb of Mary, and His spiritual and mystical body composed of the whole body of the faithful, which is the Church.⁴ Christ is the head of His mystical body; the relationship which unites Him to each of the faithful is therefore analogous to that which binds the head to the members.

Now this relationship is, in the first place, a most close union, and one so necessary that if a member be separated from the head it dies. Then it is the life-giving force exer-

¹ Cf. *Ep. CXXXVI*, n. 12.

² *Confessions*, lib. X, cap. xlii: *Mediator autem inter Deum et homines oportebat ut haberet aliquid simile Deo, aliquid simile hominibus; ne in utroque hominibus similis, longe esset Deo; aut in utroque Deo similis, longe esset ab hominibus, atque ita mediator non esset.* Cf. xliii.

³ *De civitate Dei*, X, iii.

⁴ *Enarr. in psalm. XC*, sermo II, n. 1; *in psalm. XXXVI*, sermo III, n. 4; *in psalm. CXXVI*, n. 3; *De doctrina Christ.*, lib. III, n. 44. See also an excellent analysis of the thought of St. Augustine on this subject in M. Lamache: *Le dogme de la communion des Saints*, 1912, p. 44 *seqq.*

cised by the head on the whole body; life springs from the head and spreads therefrom to all the members. It is, finally, the subordination of the members to the head; the head directs all the members, and these must conform in all things to the impulses which they receive from it.

The most close union of Christ with the faithful, the sanctifying influence He exercises on them, and the directing of them which is impressed by His headship of the Church and as the most perfect model of holiness; such is, according to St. Augustine, who comments on St. Paul, the relationship of Jesus with Christians.

We may picture to ourselves the magnificent ascetic reflections which are to be deduced from this beautiful doctrine.

The union of Christ with His mystical body is so close that to St. Augustine it is a kind of identity. One of the fundamental ideas in the theology of the Bishop of Hippo is that Jesus and His Church are one. He speaks through her, He acts through her, He commands through her, and continues through her to teach the world and to sanctify souls. That is why we must listen to the Church as to Jesus Christ Himself.

"Let, then, Christ speak," cries St. Augustine in one of his homilies, "for in Christ the Church speaks and the Church in Christ; the body in the head and the head in the body."¹

When the Church administers a sacrament it is Christ who administers it, for the actions of the Church are in reality those of Christ Himself. We are thus able to understand how high and excellent is the dignity of the ministers of the Church, through whom Christ acts when they perform her sacred rites.

"In the administration of Baptism the Church does not put her trust in man (who baptizes), but in Christ, of whom it is said, 'It is He who baptizes' (Joan. i. 33). Consequently, whoever the man is who baptizes, whatever his misery, it is not on him, but on Christ Himself, that the dove has descended (Joan. i. 32), which baptizes."² The mystical body of Christ is thus, in a manner, Christ Himself. St. Augustine often says that Christ is at the same time the head and the body of His Church; He is its head physically by nature; He is its body spiritually. Christians may therefore be called Christs, for there is a moral identity in Christ and the members of His mystical body.

"It is not only our head (Christ) who has been anointed

¹ *Enarr. in psalm. XXX, enarr. II, sermo I, n. 4. Cf. in psalm. CXXXVIII, n. 2; in psalm. CXL, n. 3, 6, 7; Ep. CXL, n. 18, etc.*

² *Ep. LXXXIX, n. 5. Cf. in Joan. tract. V, n. 18; Contra litteras Petiliani, III, n. 59, 65, 67, etc.*

with the unction of which the Psalmist speaks (Ps. xxvi., title), but it is likewise His body, which we ourselves are. . . . Like a lamb without blemish He has redeemed us by the shedding of His blood, He has incorporated us with Himself, He has made us His members, so that we also may be Christ. . . . Hence we are the body of Christ because we are all anointed, and are all Christs in Him and are Christ, because in a certain way the head and the body are the whole Christ."¹

The profound reason which, according to St. Augustine, explains this close union of Christ with the faithful, let it be repeated, is that the Word, becoming incarnate, is physically, hypostatically, united to human nature which He has taken, and spiritually to each one of those who are incorporated in Him by Baptism. So that the Lord Jesus has become our flesh by his temporal birth, as we have become His body by our baptismal re-birth.² The Christian is therefore a kind of mystic incarnation; so much so that all the happy effects which the Word has brought about physically in human nature, to which He was united, are reproduced spiritually, morally, in each one of us. Also, the principal end of the incarnation, according to St. Augustine, is to save mankind by doing away with sin³ and enabling man to participate in the divine nature: "Because of us, so that we might be redeemed (*reficeremur*) and might become participants in His divinity and restored to our right to eternal life (*reparati ad vitam aeternam*); because of that, I say, the Son of God has made Himself a participant in our mortal nature."⁴ . . . God wills to make a god of thee, O Christian, not by nature, as is His Son, whom He has begotten, but by grace and by adoption. In the same manner, also, that His Son, by His humanity has become a partaker of our mortality, so He has exalted thee and has made thee a partaker of His immortality.⁵ . . . The passage of the Gospel, my brethren, in which

¹ *Enarr. in psalm. XXVI, enarr. II, n. 2. Cf. In psalm. LVIII, sermo I, n. 2; in psalm. CXXVII, n. 3.*

² St. Leo the Great, *Sermo XXIII, De nativitat. Domini*, IV, 5: *sicut factus est Dominus Jesus caro nostra nascendo, ita et nos facti sumus corpus ipsius renascendo*. The essential difference between the hypostatic union of the Word with human nature in Jesus Christ and the spiritual union of the Word incarnate with the Christian is well understood. In Christ, human nature, because of its union with the Word, has no person; whereas the Christian, united to Christ, however perfect and intimate the union, always preserves his personality.

³ St. Augustine clearly teaches that if man had not sinned, the Word would not have become incarnate. *Cf. Sermo CLXXV, n. 1; sermo CLXXIV, n. 8; sermo CCXV, n. 4; Enarr. in psalm. XXXVI, n. 15; in psalm. CXIX, n. 2, etc.* St. Leo the Great teaches the same thing, *Sermo LXXVII, 2.*

⁴ *Enarr. in psalm. CXXXVIII, n. 3. Cf. Enarr. in psalm. CXVIII, sermo XVI, n. 6.*

⁵ *Sermo CLXVI, n. 4. Cf. Sermo CXVII, n. 15; Ep. CXXXVII, n. 12.*

the Lord calls Himself the vine and His disciples the branches (Joan. xv. 1) signifies that He is the head of the Church and we its members; Christ Jesus, as man, is the mediator between God and man. The vine and its branches, indeed, are of like nature; that is why Christ, being God, which we are not, became man, so that the vine—that is to say, human nature—might be in Him, and that we men might be able to be His branches.”¹

The Greek Fathers, and particularly St. Athanasius and St. Cyril of Alexandria, also teach that the incarnation was necessary in order to save and sanctify us. A man could not redeem us; the Word of God alone, God like His Father and hypostatically united to our nature, was capable of working our redemption and making us partakers of the divine nature.²

On account of the union which binds Christ to His mystical body, a sort of inter-communication of properties and actions is established between them. That which belongs to Christ is attributed to the Church and the faithful, and *vice versa*.³ Thus we have been tempted in Christ and with Him in the desert; we have also been victorious in Him and with Him.⁴ His prayer is our prayer because He prays in us and through us.⁵ We have suffered with Him during His passion and have risen with Him on the day of His resurrection. We have gone up with Him to heaven on the day of His ascension to be seated like Him at the right hand of the Father.⁶ And now Christ continues to suffer in His Church, His mystical body, as also He is glorified in her, because of the good works which she continues here below.

“The Church suffers in Christ when He suffers for her, just as Christ suffers in the Church when she suffers for Him. For as we have heard the voice of the Church suffering in Christ and saying, *My God, my God, look Thou upon me* (Ps. xxi. 2), so equally have we heard the voice of Christ suffering in the Church and saying: *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?* (Acts ix. 4)⁷ . . . All that Christ has suffered we also have suffered in Him, and those things which we ourselves suffer He suffers in us. . . . If we are dead in Him, as the Apostle says (Col. ii. 20), we have also risen with

¹ In Joan. tract. LXXX, n. 1.

² This is the great argument which St. Athanasius made use of to prove to the Arians the divinity of the Word (*Oratio de incarnatione*, 6-q), and St. Cyril of Alexandria († 444) to prove to the Nestorians the unity of the Person of Jesus Christ. See his commentary on St. John (P.G. LXXXIII). Cf. Tixeront, II, pp. 148, 149; pp. 79, 240 *seqq.*

³ St. Augustine, *Enarr. in psalm. XXX, enarr. II, n. 3; in psalm. CXL, n. 3.*

⁴ *Enarr. in psalm. LX, n. 2.*

⁵ *Enarr. in psalm. LXXXV, n. 1.*

⁶ St. Leo the Great, *Sermo LXX, de Passione Domini*, XIX, 5.

⁷ *Ep. CXL, n. 18. Cf. Enarr. in psalm. LIV, n. 17; Sermo CCCLX, n. 14; Sermo CXXXVII, n. 2; In Joan., tract. XXVIII, n. 1.*

Him again. . . . And if we are dead and risen again in Him, He Himself dies and rises again in us.¹ When Christ ascended into heaven we were not only confirmed in our right to paradise, but we have entered there with Him. The ineffable grace of Christ has given us back more than the jealousy of the devil caused us to lose. For those whom the venomous enemy has driven from the first abode of happiness the Son of God, having incorporated them with Himself, has placed at the right hand of the Father² . . . and none can ascend to heaven unless he become a member of the body of Christ to be raised up with Him to the eternal abode."³

There is, then, between Christ and ourselves a destiny in common. God deals with us as with Christ Himself, because it is impossible to separate the body from the head, and the lot of the head must also be that of the body. What confidence ought not the Christian to have in Christ, to whom he is so closely united! Surely God was not able to show His regard for humanity with greater tenderness or more grandeur than in decreeing the incarnation of His Son! And the gratitude due to Him is so great that we are incapable of bearing witness to it as we should.⁴

In the light of this beautiful teaching we are able to understand the greatness of the Christian's dignity and how pure and holy should be his life.

"Do thou recognize thy dignity, O Christian," exclaimed St. Leo the Great on this subject. "Thou hast become a partaker in the divine nature, return not then to thy first baseness by an unworthy life. Do thou remember the head to whom thou belongest and the body of which thou art a member. Do thou remember that thou hast been torn away from the power of darkness and transplanted into the light of the kingdom of God."⁵

The members of a body are not only united to the head; they also receive from it their life and movement. The soul which animates our body animates and vivifies, in the first place, the head, the seat of the senses, and from thence it spreads life into all the members. In Christ our head is found the source of grace, which is infused into all the members of the Church.

¹ *Enarr. in psalm. LXII*, n. 2.

² St. Leo the Great, *Sermo LXXIII, De ascensione Domini*, I, 4.

³ St. Augustine, *Sermo XCI*, n. 7.

⁴ *De vera religione*, n. 30; *De civitate Dei*, lib. VII, cap. xxxi.

⁵ *Sermo XXXI, De nativitate Domini*, I, 3: *Agnosce, o christiane, dignitatem tuam, et divinae consors factus naturae, noli in veterem vilitatem degeneri conversatione redire. Memento cujus capitis et cujus corporis sis membrum. Reminiscere quia erutus de potestate tenebrarum, translatus es in Dei lumen et regnum.* Cf. *Homilia XXVII*, i, of Macarius the Egyptian (P.G. XXXIV, 693).

"The very source of grace is in our head, and from thence it is distributed among all the members according to the measure suitable to each one of them. The same grace, which at the beginning of our conversion to the faith, made us Christians, has also made Christ (at the incarnation). The same Spirit which gives the Christian re-birth has made Christ to be born; the same Spirit by which our sins have been remitted has made Christ absolutely without sin."¹

The Holy Spirit, which in the first place sanctified the humanity of Christ, sanctifies also the members of His mystical body. "That which the soul is to the body of man," says again St. Augustine, "the Holy Spirit is to the body of Christ, which is the Church; the Holy Spirit operates in the whole Church as the soul operates in all the members of the same body."²

And as the Holy Spirit is first of all in the head—that is, in Christ—in order to be communicated thence to its members, it is therefore the Spirit of the head, of Christ, which sanctifies the whole Church, inspiring its every movement, embellishing it with all virtues and bestowing upon it every gift.³

Moreover, the Holy Spirit becomes the spirit of Christ from the fact that it animates and vivifies the body of Christ. That is why, in order to possess the Holy Spirit, the spirit of Christ, we must form part of the body of Christ in the unity of the Church.⁴ Heretics cannot have the Holy Spirit.

"Let the faithful become the body of Christ if they wish to live by the spirit of Christ. It is impossible to live by the spirit of Christ if we are not of the body of Christ. . . . My body, indeed, lives by my spirit. Wouldst thou also live by the spirit of Christ? Be in the body of Christ. Does my body live by thy spirit? No, my body lives by my spirit, and thy body by thine. In the same way, the body of Christ can only live by the spirit of Christ."⁵

It is the Holy Spirit which forms the mystical body of Christ, in the same way that His natural body was formed in the womb of the Virgin Mary. For in order to be incorporated with Christ we must be re-born in the waters of Baptism, whence we obtain remission of sin. This spiritual regeneration is effected by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and also the remission of sin.⁶ For the remission of sin is brought about by the infusion of charity in the soul of the Christian, and it is the Holy Spirit which spreads this

¹ *De predestinatione Sanctorum*, n. 31.

² *Sermo* CCLXVII, n. 4; cf. *Sermo* CCLXVIII, n. 2.

³ St. Leo the Great, *Sermo* LXXIX, n. 4; *Sermo* LXXVI, n. 7.

⁴ St. Augustine, *Ep.* CLXXXV, n. 50; *In Joan.* tract. XXXII, n. 7; *Sermo* CCLXVII, n. 4. See St. Nilus, *Ep.* lib. I, 78 (P.G. LXXIX, 116).

⁵ *In Joan.* tract. XXVI, n. 13.

⁶ *Sermo* CCXCIV, n. 10; *De anima et ejus origine*, I, n. 10.

charity.¹ The incorporation with Christ is completed and perfected by the Eucharist, which is "the sign of unity, the bond of charity."²

The Holy Spirit exerts unceasingly a sanctifying action on the members of the body of Christ, which has for its object the assimilating of them to their head. He has sanctified Christ and has made His soul a masterpiece of perfection, and He desires to make us, as much as possible, conformable to this divine model.³ He begins by creating in us the inward dispositions of love for God, of devotion to our neighbour, and of the renunciation of ourselves and worldly possessions, in resemblance to the soul of Jesus. And when Christ is thus "formed in us" the Holy Spirit impels us to show Him outwardly by our deeds.⁴ Our good works, according to the happy expression of St. Nilus, are the nourishment of Christ, which makes Him increase within us.⁵

It is thus that the Holy Spirit is the soul of the mystical body of Jesus, and that He animates and vivifies each one of us. If the Word incarnate had been content to exhort us to goodness by His example without filling us with His spirit, we should never have been able to become like Him.⁶

Let us then be led by the spirit of Christ, and let us obey His inspirations and not those of the flesh. Let us renounce our own spirit and the divine spirit will be given us abundantly. Happy the poor in their own spirit: they are rich in the spirit of God: *Beati ergo pauperes spiritu suo, divites Spiritu Dei.*⁷

The Holy Spirit, the divine artist, works upon our souls in order to imprint upon them the likeness of Christ. We ought, on our side, to co-operate with this work and to strive to become as other Christs. In a body, the motions of the members are so ordered as to conform to the direction of the head. We, too, then, as members of the body of Christ, should obey our Head and follow His inspirations.

To obey Christ is first to follow fully and willingly the directions of the Church, by which He commands. The

¹ *Sermo* LXXI, n. 30, 33; *De baptismo contra Donatistas*, III, 21.

² *In Joan.* tract. XXVI, n. 13.

³ Cf. Macarius the Egyptian, *Liber de Charitate*, VII. Those who are fully united to the Spirit of God are rendered like to Christ Himself ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀφωμολῶνται (P.G. XXXIV, 913).

⁴ St. Augustine, *Sermo* CXCI, n. 2: *Hunc (Christum) fide concipite, operibus edite.*

⁵ *Ep.*, lib. I, 250, 251 (P.G. LXXIX, 176), lib. III, 7 (col. 369).

⁶ St. Augustine, *In Joan.*, tract. XCIII, n. 1. Certain Greek Fathers compare the Holy Spirit to a seal (σφραγίς), which imprints in our hearts the image of Christ to render us like to Him. Cf. St. Athanasius, *ad Serapionem*, *Ep.* I, 23; III, 3 (P.G. XXVI, 585, 629). L. Labauche, *Leçons de théol. dogm.*, p. 297. Paris, 1911.

⁷ *Enarr. in psalm.* CXLI, n. 5. Cf. CLI, n. 2.

fervent Christian not only respects the orders issued by ecclesiastical authority, but follows filially all its counsels. To obey Christ is also to practise that more perfect, more complete obedience which consists in imitation. To imitate Jesus, to conform our life to His, is, as we shall see, one of the principal duties of the Christian.

II.—THE DUTIES OF THE FAITHFUL TOWARDS CHRIST: TO LOVE AND TO IMITATE HIM

OUR gratitude towards Christ ought to be shown by a love without limit, so immense are the benefits for which we are beholden to Him.

Christian piety, in its desire to express its love for Jesus, has delighted, from the earliest times, to enumerate His claims to our gratitude. These claims are gathered together in the one title of Redeemer, which recalls to us all that Christ has done on our behalf. But this mission of redemption may be analyzed into its component parts, so that we may understand more completely the greatness of the love which caused Him to undertake it.

Christ began the work of our salvation by teaching His doctrine. Thus is He our *Master*, our one and only Master in its highest sense, who teaches that which it is needful for us to know—that is, the road which leads us to life eternal.¹ Not content with giving us outward instruction, He also teaches us from within. He is the *Sun of justice*, the Truth that directly enlightens our minds. When the soul forsakes this Sun, abandons, that is, the interior contemplation of unchangeable Truth, it wanders astray and is carried impetuously towards material things.² With what readiness ought we to follow this divine light, with which Christ penetrates our souls!

On the road to heaven we are from time to time assailed by our enemies, who attack us and leave us wounded. Jesus, charitable *Physician*, comes and heals us. It is He who was the good Samaritan, who has dressed the wounds of humanity, stripped and bruised by original sin.³

He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is our knowledge and wisdom: *Scientia ergo nostra Christus est, sapientia quoque nostra idem Christus est.*⁴

He is our *King* and our *Sovereign Lord*, as He is the King and Lord of the angels and saints.⁵

¹ St. Augustine, *Sermo* CCLXV, n. 5.

² *Id.*, in *psalm*. XXV, *enarr.* II, n. 3; *Ep.* XV, n. 8. Cf. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Homil.* XI. In *sanctam Mariam Deiparam* (P.G. LXXVII, 1032).

³ *Sermo* CLXXI, n. 2; *Sermo* CCLXXVIII, n. 5.

⁴ *De Trinitate*, lib. XIII, n. 24.

⁵ *De catechiz. rudibus*, n. 26.

He is the *Spouse* of the Church. When He came on earth He found His future bride disfigured, for the souls of men were stained with sin. He purified them with His blood and made of them His Church, His beautiful and spotless bride, which He loves so intensely. The Church, on her side, has a deep love for Christ, her Spouse, and our love must be as hers, because we are His well-beloved bride.¹

We ought, then, to love Jesus Christ above all things; nothing ought to be preferred to Him.² He is lovable with the highest love and is incomparably beautiful. "He is beautiful as God, as the Word that is with God, in the womb of the Virgin, where, without losing His divinity, He took our humanity; He is beautiful when born a little child . . . and again in the performance of His miracles; beautiful in His scourging; beautiful when He exhorts to eternal life, when He despises death and renders up His soul and when He takes it again; He is beautiful on the cross and in the tomb and beautiful in heaven."³

If we truly love Jesus we must strive to imitate Him; imitation is the choicest fruit of love.⁴ On this subject of the imitation of Christ the Fathers of the Church are inexhaustible.

St. Augustine sees in it one of the motives for the incarnation. Man must imitate God, he says, for therein lies, as even certain pagan philosophers themselves have taught, his perfection and happiness. But God is too far off. The eternal Wisdom took our nature in order to become visible and to show us what we must do to resemble Him.⁵ In becoming man the Word becomes a master who teaches us and a helper to aid us by His grace to follow His teaching.⁶ Our ailing sight, since the fall, was not able to look upon God to read in Him our duty; the Son of God, in making Himself a little child, has given us a salve wherewith to anoint our eyes and so enable them to see the divine majesty in the humility of our flesh, in order that we might conform our life to His.⁷

We must endeavour to imitate Christ in all the circumstances of His life, in His childhood and in His riper age, to the end that He may be reproduced in us as far as may be

¹ *Enarr. in psalm. XLIV, n. 3.*

² *De civitate Dei, lib. XXI, cap. xxvi.*

³ *Enarr. in psalm. XLIV, n. 3.*

⁴ *Sermo CCCIV, n. 2.* Aphraates the Syrian, in his *Demonstrations*, when he speaks of Christian virtues, always proposes Christ as the model to be imitated.

⁵ *De utilitate credendi, n. 33. Cf. Ep. CXL, n. 7.*

⁶ *Ep. CXXXVII, n. 12. Cf. St. Leo the Great, Sermo LXIII, De Passione Domini, xii, 4.*

⁷ *In Joan., tract. II, n. 16; tract. XLIV, n. 1.*

in our weakness.¹ Jesus, indeed, purposed in each of His actions to teach us how we ourselves must act in the different circumstances of life.² The model of all perfection, the pattern of the human race, our Lord and God incarnate, set before us for imitation, like a living picture, the life He lived here below in the flesh, in which every virtue was resplendent.³

In making Himself man, the Word humbled Himself and gave an excellent remedy for our pride. If this medicine does not heal our vainglory it is then incurable. *Haec medicina si superbiam non curat, quid enim curat nescio.*⁴

Christ willed to be born and to live in poverty to show us the nothingness of earthly goods and to direct our eyes and our desires on high, where only true riches are to be found. What consolation has He not brought to those who are poor here below!⁵

The first Adam disobeyed to the extent of deserving death; the second Adam was obedient unto death in order to save us.⁶ In each of His actions Christ followed the will of His Father and practised obedience.

Jesus suffered doubtless to redeem us, but also to teach us how to suffer, as also He prayed to teach us how to pray.⁷ And He was willing to be crucified, to submit to this infamous punishment, to the end that His faithful people might be encouraged to accept, if necessary, every kind of death, even the most ignoble in the eyes of men.

What consolation and comfort does not the example of Christ bring to us! "If we find our sufferings hard to bear, let us call to mind that Jesus was bound, scourged, and crucified. If the kind of death we must endure brings horror to our poor nature, let us remember that in the time of Christ there was no death so dishonourable as that of the cross."⁸ For he who desires to imitate Christ must, before all things, endure with courage the afflictions which come upon him; the bodily sickness, the insults and shame, and even the molestations of our invisible enemies. It is by the endurance of these trials that we show our love for God.⁹ The passion which Christ voluntarily suffered is our consolation. When we suffer, let us look towards our Head and ask ourselves: If He has so suffered, what ought we not to suffer ourselves?¹⁰

¹ St. Leo the Great, *Sermo XXI, in Epiphaniam Domini*, I, 3.

² St. Augustine, *Sermo LXXV*, n. 2; *Sermo CCCLXII*, n. 8.

³ Hesychius, *De imper. et virt.*, *Centuria*, i, 12 (P.G. XCIII, 1484, 1485).

⁴ St. Augustine, *Sermo LXXVIII*, n. 11. Cf. *De civitate Dei*, lib. X, cap. xxiv.

⁵ *Ep.* CXL, n. 14, 29, 30; *Sermo CCXL*, n. 6, 7; *Sermo CCCIX*, n. 2.

⁶ *De civitate Dei*, lib. XIV, cap. xv. ⁷ *Enarr. in psalm.* LVI, n. 5.

⁸ *Sermo LXXXVIII*, n. 7. Cf. *De fide et symbolo*, n. 11.

⁹ Macarius the Egyptian, *Liber de libertate mentis*, 13 (P.G. XXXIV, 945).

¹⁰ *Enarr. in psalm.* XXXIV, *sermo* II, n. 1.

III.—THE SANCTIFYING EFFECTS OF THE EUCHARIST

It is, above all, by means of the Eucharist that we become the mystical body of Christ, and that that wonderful and close union between Him and ourselves, which we have just been considering, is brought about.¹ In the same way that the eucharistic bread is formed by the intimate union of a great number of grains of wheat, and that the wine of the chalice is made from the juice of many grapes, so are the faithful all over the world united with each other and with Christ by Communion.²

St. Cyril of Alexandria, who deeply studied the mystery of our union with Christ, together with that of the hypostatic union, compares the union of the communicant with Jesus to that of two pieces of wax melted together so that they totally intermingle. Or again, to that of leaven with paste; the leaven penetrates every part of the paste, thus becoming one with it. Christ, by Communion, entirely pervades us also, so that He creates a mutual dwelling-place between Himself and us; we become one body with Him (σύσσωμοι).³

By the Eucharist we are transformed into that which we receive; we bear in our minds and in our flesh Christ, in whom and with whom we die, are buried, and rise again.⁴ For it is not we who change Christ into ourselves, as we do when we partake of ordinary nourishment, but it is Christ who changes us into Himself.⁵

It is by the celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice that the most perfect expression of our union and incorporation with Christ is found. Jesus, at the altar, offers to God His natural body with His blood; He offers, also, at the same time, His mystical body, the Church, which is inseparable from Him.

This offering of the whole Church, united at the altar with that of Christ, is symbolized by the mixture of water and wine in the chalice. The water represents the Christian people, who are united to the Saviour, to make with Him one single oblation, the eucharistic oblation.⁶

¹ St. John Chrysostom, *In Ep. I ad Cor.*, Hom. XXIV, 2 (P.G. LXI, 200). St. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joan. Evang.*, XI, 11 (P.G. LXXIV, 558).

² St. Cyprian, *Ep.* LXIX, *ad Magnum*. 5; St. Augustine, *Sermo* CCXVII.

³ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joan. Evang.*, VI, 57 (P.G. LXXIII, 584). Cf. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.*, xxii, 3 (P.G. XXXIII, 1100); St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. Catech.*, xxxvii (P.G. XLV, 93).

⁴ St. Leo the Great, *Sermo* LXIII, *De Passione Domini*, xii, 7.

⁵ St. Augustine, *Confess.*, VII, 10: *Cibus sum grandium, cresce et manducabis me. Nec tu me in te mutabis, sicut cibus carnis tue, sed tu mutaberis in me.*

⁶ St. Cyprian, *Ep.* LXIII, *ad Caecilium*, 13 (Hartel, III, pp. 711, 712).

The Church, then, with Christ and in union with Him, is the victim of the eucharistic sacrifice. Of this she is conscious in that she offers herself with Jesus on the altar of sacrifice.

"All the ransomed city," says St. Augustine, "that is to say, the assembly of the company of the saints, is offered to God as an universal sacrifice by the High Priest who is offered Himself in His passion for us, so that we may be the body of so noble a head. . . . Such is the sacrifice of Christians, to be all one same body with Christ. It is also that which is accomplished by the Church in the sacrament of the altar, as is well known by the faithful, where she offers herself to God in the oblation which she makes to Him."¹

Christ, in the eucharistic sacrifice, is at the same time both priest and victim: *Ipse igitur sacerdos et victima*.² The Church in all things, like her Spouse, is also priest and victim, for she offers herself in sacrifice with Him upon the altar. The prayers of the *Ordinary of the Mass* constantly suggest the idea that the Church—that is, the faithful—is offered in sacrifice to God at the same time as Jesus and in union with Him. The Christian who assists at the eucharistic sacrifice and takes his share in the best way by uniting himself to the whole Church as an offering to God with Christ, is, in a certain measure, both priest and victim.

By the Eucharist we also receive the divine life; we are in a way made divine.

In controversy with the Arians and Nestorians the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries emphasize this truth, incontestable and uncontested, to establish the divinity of the Word and the unity of person in Christ.

It is because the incarnate Word is God, like His Father, that He communicates to us by His eucharistic flesh that life which comes from the Father. For if He were not God, how could His flesh, which we receive within us in Communion, transmit to us the divine life?³

In the same way, if there were only a moral, accidental union between the person of the Word and our human nature, as Nestorius held, the flesh of Christ would not be filled with divinity and the Eucharist would not benefit us. Whereas, if the humanity is hypostatically united to the person of the Word, the flesh of Christ is wholly penetrated by the divinity, like iron, which, thrown into the fire, acquires the property of fire, though still remaining iron. The flesh of Christ is thus vivifying (*σὰρξ ζωοποιός*) and communicates divine life to the communicant,⁴ who thereby becomes sanctified and made divine in his body and soul, like water placed near the fire,

¹ *De civitate Dei*, lib. X, cap. vi. Cf. *Sermo* CCXXIX.

² St. Augustine, *Tract. adv. Judaeos*, n. 8. Cf. *Confess.*, X, 43.

³ St. Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, lib. VIII, cap. 13-16.

⁴ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Contre-anathématisme*, XI (P.G. LXXVI, 309-312).

which receives the power to burn. His flesh acquires qualities altogether divine, such as the appeasement and calming of the passions. It also receives the principle of immortality, a living ember smouldering among the ashes, which will be revived again at the last day.¹

From these dogmatic principles most valuable consequences are deduced.

On his return from the eucharistic table, where he has been nourished with the flesh of Christ, the Christian should be terrible as a lion in the struggle with the devil.²

What strength has he not acquired against evil and to accomplish good? Cassian tells of a young man, tormented by the demon of impurity, who was freed therefrom by receiving the Eucharist.³ St. Nilus recommends eucharistic communion to those who desire to purify their souls from the least stain and to become strong in well-doing.⁴

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, says Hesychius, is like a divine fire which consumes our faults and miseries. As soon as He enters into us by Communion He drives from our hearts the spirit of malice, effaces our sins, and preserves our soul from evil thoughts. If afterwards we are careful to guard our hearts and keep them shut against all evil, when we again approach the holy mysteries, the divine body will impregnate our souls with more and more light, making them to shine like the stars.⁵

IV.—DEVOTION TO MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD

THE Virgin Mary, since the beginning of Christianity, has profoundly influenced the piety of the faithful; first, because of her incomparable virginity and sanctity, and also on account of the position she occupies in the redemption, and finally, and above all, because of her dignity as Mother of God.⁶

It is the virginity of Mary which attracted the attention of ascetics at an early date. The first form of Christian asceticism, we know, was the practice of continence. The Mother of Christ, who remained a virgin whilst becoming a mother, became then a moving example to the continent. She was the first woman to make profession of virginity:

¹ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joan. Evang.*, VI, 55, 56 (P.G. LXXIII, 580-584), cf. vi, 35. Tixeront, III, p. 240 *seqq.*

² St. John Chrysostom, *In Joan. Homil.*, XLVI, 3 (P.G. LIX, 260).

³ *Collatio* xxii, cap. 6.

⁴ *Ep. lib. I*, 44, 100 (P.G. LXXIX, 104, 125).

⁵ Hesychius, *De temp. et virt.*, *Centuria*, i, 100 (P.G. XCIII, 1512).

⁶ Cf. Neubert, *Marie dans l'Eglise antenicéene*, Paris, 1908.

*coepit dignitas virginalis a matre Domini.*¹ And the fact that Christ willed to have a virgin as mother very clearly demonstrates His predilection for this state.

Also, in the second century, the *Clementine letters* signalized Mary as a model of virginity. Later on St. Ambrose persuaded a number of young Milanese maidens to take the veil by proposing for their imitation "St. Mary," the virgin without equal, in whom shone forth all the virtues of the Christian virgin.

The example of Mary made such progress in asceticism that, in order to arrest it, heresy and the spirit of the world strove to destroy, or at least to diminish, the halo of virginity which surrounded the personality of the Mother of Christ. The vigorous replies of St. Ambrose, and above all of St. Jerome, to the blasphemies of Helvidius and Jovinian, will be remembered.

These polemics had, amongst other results, that of bringing more into light the perpetual virginity of Mary, who remained a virgin in her conception of Jesus, in childbirth, and until her last breath: *Virgo concipiens, virgo pariens, virgo moriens.*² Before the angel Gabriel announced to her that she would give birth to Christ Mary had taken a vow to remain always a virgin, and that was one of the causes of her distress when she heard that, in accordance with the design of God, she must become the mother of the Saviour.³ At this angelic interview the modesty and humility of Mary were also made wonderfully manifest.⁴ Where could be found a more perfect model for Christian womanhood, and above all for the virgin consecrated to God?

St. Augustine, who so extolled "holy virginity," hardly finds words to express his admiration and veneration of Mary. Mary, at once virgin and mother, is the honour of the earth (*dignitas terrae*).⁵ All virgins, of whom she is, in a manner, the mother, are honoured in her. The glory of her virginal childbirth, of her fruitful virginity, is reflected on all virgins, for it is through virginity that the Son of God came into the world. All virgins are thus, in a certain way, the mothers of Christ with Mary if they do the will of the heavenly Father.⁶

Mary is not only a virgin; she is also eminently perfect. Was it not needful that she, who was to become the mother

¹ St. Augustine, *Sermo* LI, n. 26.

² St. Augustine, *De catech. rudibus*, n. 40. Cf. *Sermo* LI, n. 18; *Sermo* CXCVI, n. 1.

³ St. Augustine, *De sancta virginitate*, n. 4; *Sermo* CCXXV, n. 2; *Sermo* CCXCI, n. 5.

⁴ *Sermo* LI, n. 18.

⁵ *De Genesi contra manich.*, ii, n. 37.

⁶ *De sancta virginitate*, 5: *ille unius sanctae virginis partus omnium sanctarum virginum est decus. Et ipsae cum Maria Matres Christi sunt, si Patris ejus faciunt voluntatem.*

of purity and holiness, should be entirely pure and excellently holy herself? Sin never touched her. St. Ephrem, the *harp of the Holy Spirit*, joins with all the Eastern Church in ever singing of this holiness of Mary, and does not hesitate to compare her to the Son of God. He places in the mouth of the Church of Edessa these words :

"Yes, truly, O Lord, Thou and Thy Mother are the only ones who are perfectly beautiful in every way, for in Thee, O Lord, there is no spot, and in Thy Mother no stain whatever. My children do not in any way resemble these two in their incomparable loveliness."¹

Whilst the virginity and holiness of Mary shone forth with a radiance more and more bright in the wondering eyes of the faithful, her rôle in the salvation of the world was also revealed, and inspired all hearts with confidence.

St. Irenaeus² and Tertullian³ established a parallel between Eve and Mary. If the human race was lost through a woman, it has been saved through a woman also. The devil made use of Eve to bring about our loss; God made use of Mary to frustrate Satan's plans. Mary is thus the advocate (*advocata*)⁴ of Eve and the whole human race.

"By one woman death, by another woman life," says St. Augustine.⁵ . . . "Let both sexes think of their honour, confessing their sin and hoping for salvation. In order to deceive the first man, the poison was offered by woman; to redeem man, on the contrary, salvation is given through woman. Woman, through the childbirth of Christ, redeems the fault she committed by deceiving man."⁶

Mary, then, is our deliverer. It is towards her that sinful and captive humanity raises its weeping eyes to implore pardon and deliverance. With what trustfulness does it not hope, by the mediation of this powerful advocate, to obtain mercy, peace, and salvation.

For if it is through Mary that our Saviour has been given us, it is also through her that we have been granted the means of salvation. It is through Mary, says St. Cyril of Alexandria, that "Christian churches have been founded in towns, villages, and islands . . . and that every faithful soul is saved." It is through her that "the light" of truth "has shone on those who were seated in darkness and in the shadow of death."⁷ The faithful Christian is thus earnestly invited to send up his petitions through Mary, that she may herself present them to God and render them fruitful.

¹ *Carmina nisibina*, n. 27, ed. Bickell, 122. *Rouet de Journal, Enchirid. patr.*, 285.

² *Adversus Haereses*, v, 19.

³ *De Carne Christi*, 17.

⁴ St. Irenaeus, *id.* ⁵ *Sermo CCXXXII*, n. 2. ⁶ *Sermo II*, n. 4.

⁷ *Homil.*, XI. *In sanctam Mariam Deiparam* (P.G. LXXVII, 1033).

Our confidence is further increased from the fact that Mary is our mother.

She is the Mother of Christ according to the flesh, who is our head, and she is spiritually the mother of the faithful, who are the members of her Son. Mary is the Mother of the whole Christ—that is, of His natural body and of His mystical body. We are, then, the spiritual children of Mary; she has a truly maternal love for us; she co-operated in our salvation by her love, and she conduced to our birth in the Church, by which we are incorporated in Christ with the assurance of redemption.¹

“Mary is in very truth the mother of the just.”² What filial confidence ought we not to have in her!

Devotion to Mary increased considerably its scope when the dogma of the divine maternity was defined at the third Œcumenical Council in 431, when Nestorius was condemned. The burst of enthusiasm which was occasioned amongst the people of Ephesus by the proclamation of the privileges of Mary shows how the aspirations of Christian piety were satisfied. We find echoes of this universal joy in a homily which was pronounced by St. Cyril of Alexandria before the “holy Fathers of the Council, masters of piety, pillars of the faith,” who had the courage to face “the heat and tempest” and other hardships of travel to come to Ephesus, a city more famous than ever, “the honour of the province of Asia,” to the end that they might “avenge Mary, the Mother of God (θεοτόκος), on account of the blasphemies which an impious wickedness had uttered against her.”³

This dignity of Mother of God, unique in the world, was the object of an extraordinary veneration on the part of all Christians. “Mary, the Mother of God,” said St. Nilus, “is venerated throughout the whole universe.”⁴ What praises were addressed to her from that time on account of her holiness, her exquisite purity, and her richness in such supernatural gifts of every kind as befit the Mother of God! The Eastern writers, after the Council of Ephesus, celebrate the glory of Mary with an abundance of expressions, an accumulation of imagery and comparisons, an untiring redundancy, which show that, however eloquent it may be, human

¹ *De sancta virgin.*, n. 6: *Maria Spiritu Mater membrorum Christi est quia cooperata est charitate ut fideles in ecclesia nascerentur . . . corpore vero ipsius capitis nostri mater est.* St. Augustine compares the Church to Mary, the Church which is also virgin and mother, the virginity of which is fruitful because she brings forth the faithful members of the mystical body of Christ. *Id.*, n. 2, 6.

² St. Nilus, *Ep.* lib. I, 266, 267 (P.G. LXXIX, 180, 181).

³ *Homil.*, XI, *In sanctam Mariam Deiparam* (P.G. LXXVII, 1029-1032).

⁴ *Ep.*, lib. II, 180 (P.G. LXXIX, 295).

language is powerless to praise with deserving honour the dignity and holiness of the Mother of God.

"All hail to thee, Mary, Mother of God, Virgin Mary!" exclaimed St. Cyril of Alexandria before the Fathers of the Council of Ephesus. "Hail thou bearer of light, incorruptible vessel! Hail Mary! At once Virgin, Mother, and Handmaid. Virgin because of Him who is born of thy virginity; mother because of Him whom thou didst bear upon thy breast and whom thou hast nourished with thy milk; handmaid because of Him who has taken to Himself the position of a slave. . . . Hail Mary! Temple in which God has been received, the great holiness of which the prophet David proclaimed when he said: *Thy temple is holy and wonderful in thy justice* (Ps. lxiv. 6). Hail Mary! The jewel of the earth; Hail Mary! Incorruptible dove; Hail Mary! Inextinguishable lamp, for of thee is born the Sun of justice; Hail Mary! Dwelling-place of Him whom no other dwelling can contain; thou, in whom was contained the only Son of God, the God-word; thou, who with neither toil nor sowing hast made the undying ear of corn to flourish; Hail Mary! Mother of God, of whom the prophets have foretold, and through whom the shepherds gave glory to God at the manger, singing with the angels that moving hymn, *Glory to God on high in heaven: peace on earth among men of goodwill*; Hail Mary! Mother of God, because of whom the choirs of angels sing, the archangels exult and chant hymns which make us tremble. . . ."¹

¹ St. Cyril of Alexandria (P.G. LXXIX, 1032, 1033).

CHAPTER XI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MONASTIC LIFE IN THE WEST AFTER THE FIFTH CENTURY THE MONASTIC RULES OF ITALY, GAUL, AND SPAIN: THE HAGIOGRAPHERS AND LATIN ASCETICAL AUTHORS OF THIS PERIOD

FROM the sixth century, and during the great part of the Middle Ages, spirituality in the West is found almost exclusively in the monastic Rules, which were drawn up in great numbers.

At that time there were no congregations or monastic groupings embracing several religious houses governed by one head and submitting to the same Rule.¹ Each monastery was isolated and independent; it took its Rule from its founder. St. Benedict drew up his Rule solely for the organization of the monastery of Monte Cassino, which he built without suspecting that one day it would be followed in other convents. As, thanks to the zeal of bishops and the munificence of Christian kings, abbeys grew up on every side, the number of Rules drawn up was considerable.²

Monastic founders were all agreed as to the general principles of monastic life, but they had different views as to the details of the life of a monk. This variety of Rules was not without its drawbacks, and the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle in 817 thought it necessary to impose on all monasteries of the Carolingian Empire the discipline of St. Benedict. As a matter of fact, this unification tended to increase. For among the numerous Rules two or three stood out more prominently on account of the renown of their authors, and became adopted everywhere. For some time the Rules of St. Caesarius, Archbishop of Arles, St. Columbanus, and St. Benedict competed with each other for predominance. The last named eventually gained it, and became the general law for the monastic order of the Latin Church.

¹ These federations of monasteries only began in the tenth century.

² I shall only speak here of the principal ones. The documents quoted will be according to the *Patrologia latina* of Migne.

I.—THE LEGISLATORS OF MONASTIC LIFE IN ITALY: ST. BENEDICT OF NURSIA AND CASSIODORUS

ORIGINALLY of a rich and important family of Nursia, now Norcia in Umbria, St. Benedict was sent, whilst still a young man, to study in Rome. Disgusted with the world, and terrified by the dangers for those who remained living in it, he left Rome in 497, and withdrew, when only seventeen years old, into the solitude of Subiaco, fifteen leagues from the eternal city. At this time, as we know, in many parts of the West, and chiefly in Italy, there were anchorites. Benedict became one of them. He placed himself under the direction of a monk named Romanus, who visited him every week and brought him food.¹ It was at Subiaco that St. Benedict, in order to resist a violent temptation against chastity, threw himself, without clothing, into a thicket of nettles and thorns and rolled his body with such violence that it was covered with wounds.²

It was not long before the young hermit was discovered, and very soon a great number of people, either from curiosity or for edification, came to see him. He preached to them, and often his visitors went away converted. The renown of Benedict was such that the monks of a neighbouring monastery, having need of an abbot, chose the hermit of Subiaco. But, as they lived without a Rule and refused to accept one, Benedict did not remain there long, but returned to Subiaco.³ There he received disciples and organized a sort of colony of hermits dwelling in separate cells, after the manner of the monks of Ligugé, whom St. Martin had gathered round him about a century before.⁴

In spite of St. Benedict's sanctity, there arose a certain hostility towards him, and he thought it best to leave Subiaco. It was then that he and his disciples went to Monte Cassino, about fifty miles from Naples, where he founded the first Benedictine monastery in 528.⁵ It was there that he drew up, in the following year, his famous *Rule of Monastic Life*.

In composing it he made use of the *Rule* of St. Pachomius

¹ St. Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum*, lib. II, cap. 1 (P.L. LXXXVI, 128-130). The great work by Montalembert on the monks of the West is known to all.

² *Id.*, cap. 11.

³ St. Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum*, lib. II, cap. 3. The monks tried to poison their Abbot, who broke the cup containing the poison with the Sign of the Cross.

⁴ *Id.* The celebrated monk St. Maurus was one of St. Benedict's disciples.

⁵ St. Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum*, lib. II, cap. 8. St. Benedict died at Monte Cassino in 543, having foretold the day of his death and performed many miracles.

and also especially of that of St. Basil, of the *Institutions* and the *Conferences* of Cassian,¹ and of *Letter CCXI* of St. Augustine, addressed to the religious women of Hippo.

The Rule of St. Benedict is "remarkable for its wisdom" (*discretione præcipua*), says St. Gregory the Great.² With a practical genius, which had a clear insight into that which was required in his surroundings, the Abbot of Monte Cassino adapted those elements of the older Rules to his plan and object which were reconcilable with the customs and climate of the West. He also had the gift, in a high degree, of seeing at a glance what amendments were rendered necessary by the conditions in which he lived. For whilst being inspired by his forerunners, he did not hesitate when necessary to be creative.

He desired his *Rule* to be above all things the result of experience. He not only observed it himself, but made it to be observed before bringing it out. He had at heart, indeed, to impose only such things on others as he had practised himself. And thus St. Gregory the Great said of him that if one desired to know the life of the venerable Father Benedict, one had only to study his *Rule*.³ The Abbot of Monte Cassino also wished to be certain that the regulations which he drew up were not beyond the ordinary powers of his religious; that which they had practised for many years might quite safely be drafted into a Rule.

For, following the example of St. Basil, it was St. Benedict's constant care to order nothing which was too difficult or too burdensome, so that his *Rule* would be suitable to all monks and not practicable only for the few.⁴ He aimed, furthermore, at a common perfection, which was demanded of every one, but which each individual is urged to surpass by a progressive betterment of his inward dispositions.⁵

The essentially practical spirit in which the Benedictine Rule was conceived accounts for its success and its duration. From the eighth to the beginning of the thirteenth century the Abbot of Monte Cassino was almost the only law-giver of the monks of the West, so clearly had he drawn up the duties and foreseen the needs of the cloister.

I propose analyzing his *Rule* and laying special stress on those portions of it which were new and original.

The *Rule* of St. Benedict, according to the author's second edition, is divided into seventy-three chapters.⁶ It begins

¹ Cf. *Regula Sti. Benedicti*, cap. lxx.

² *Dialogorum*, II, cap. 36.

³ *Dialogorum*, II, cap. 36.

⁴ *In qua institutione nihil asperum, nihilque grave nos constituros speramus. Regula, prologus.*

⁵ Cf. *Regula*, lxxviii.

⁶ The first edition ended with chapter lxxvi. The text in Migne, P.L. LXVI, 215 seqq.

with the celebrated preface, *Ausculata o fili*, which is a striking exhortation to obedience.

"Hearken, O my son, to the precepts of thy Master, and incline the ear of thy heart; receive with joy and faithfully fulfil the admonition of thy loving Father, that thou mayest return by the labour of obedience to Him from whom thou hast departed through the sloth of disobedience. To thee, therefore, my words are now addressed, whoever thou art that, renouncing thine own will, dost put on the strong and bright armour of obedience in order to fight for the Lord Christ, our true King."

The articles of the *Rule* of St. Benedict may be grouped under these different heads: *the government of the monastery, the reception and making of novices, the divine office, manual work and study, the maintenance of the monks, corrections, monastic virtues.*

Like St. Basil, St. Benedict intended the authority which governed the monastery to be strong. This authority was to rest entirely with the abbot in the first place, and subject to him with the prior, whose jurisdiction extended over all, and with deans, who had the duty of directing every ten monks.¹

For fear lest these various dignitaries should bring about a conflict of authority, the prior and deans are to be nominated by the abbot alone, after having consulted with the older monks.² The abbatial authority is thus made absolute, as required for the maintenance of the discipline necessary to remove all causes of dissension effectively.

Nevertheless, the *Rule*, whilst placing such power in the hands of the abbot, contains certain provisions against the abuse of this authority.

It lays down that the abbot must be chosen by the community which he is to govern. In case this election is obviously defective, the bishop of the diocese where the monastery is situated, or the abbots of neighbouring monasteries, may insist on the appointment of another abbot.³ All the members of the community must be consulted in important matters, although the abbot is not obliged to follow their advice. In matters of less importance the seniors only are to be consulted.⁴

Finally, the qualities needed for an abbot are set forth at length by St. Benedict.⁵ He knew well, as did St. Pachomius and St. Basil, that the prosperity of communities depends on the wisdom of their rulers.

It also depends on the way obedience is carried out. St.

¹ *Regula*, cap. xxi, lxv.

² *Regula*, lxv. The abbot also arranges the order of precedence in the monastery, as laid down in the *Rule* (lxiii).

³ *Regula*, lxiv.

⁴ *Id.*, iii.

⁵ *Id.*, iii, lxiv.

Benedict desires his religious to perform without delay whatever is ordered, "as though coming from God Himself." Obedience, pleasing to God and agreeable to men, is that which carries out a command good-humouredly and with alacrity. The religious must obey without murmur or discontent. Joyful obedience renders everyone happy and maintains peace in community life.¹

The regulations respecting the admission of novices are the same as those of the Rule of Pachomius. St. Benedict, like St. Pachomius, directs that the postulant be left for several days at the door of the monastery and subjected to rebuffs, in order to prove his constancy.² If he endures the trial, he is introduced first of all to the guest-house and afterwards to the novitiate, where under the guidance of an older monk he is subjected to a rigorous obedience and made to study the monastic Rule. After one year of probation he makes his profession, in writing, in the presence of the whole community. Priests may be admitted to the noviceship.³

Benedictine monasteries used also to receive oblates (*oblati*) or children of tender age *offered* by their parents to a religious community. When a family desired to consecrate one of their sons to the service of God the parents made their request in writing to the abbot of the monastery, and undertook never themselves to give, or cause to be given through others, his portion of inheritance to the child. Then, during the conventual Mass, at the Offertory, they led their son to the altar, carrying in his hand the written request and also bread and wine for the eucharistic sacrifice.⁴ The child was thus consecrated to God: he belonged to the monastery, where he must henceforth live and observe the Rule. His consecration was united in an impressive manner with the consecration of the body and blood of Christ.

The Rule of St. Benedict required the monks, at the time of their profession, in the oratory and before the whole community, to take the vow of stability, which bound them irrevocably to their monastery. This pledge was taken in writing and recorded in the formula of consecration which each religious, at the time of his profession,⁵ wrote with his own hand and placed upon the altar in the presence of the abbot and all the monks. The parents took a similar pledge

¹ *Regula*, v.

² *Regula*, lviii: *Si veniens perseveraverit pulsans et illatas sibi injurias et difficultatem ingressus post quatuor aut quinque dies visus fuerit patienter portare. . . .*

³ *Regula*, viii.

⁴ *Regula*, lix. In St. Benedict's time the faithful offered at the offertory the bread and wine which were to be used at the eucharistic sacrifice.

⁵ At his profession the monk took the three ordinary vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

for the children whom they offered to the monastery.¹ It was due to this wise foresight that St. Benedict succeeded in reducing the number of wandering monks in the West.²

That part of the Rule which regulates the divine office is the longest—it includes thirteen articles—and is also the newest.

St. Pachomius and St. Basil ordered psalmody and the singing of Psalms and also certain prayers, but it is difficult to form a complete idea of the divine service in Eastern monasteries. Cassian gives us to understand that in the convents of southern Gaul there was no uniform office. St. Benedict drew up the office in a clearly defined way. Since his time there has been no essential change. The Roman breviary has abridged the Benedictine office, but it has retained its form.

That which characterizes the Benedictine Rule, in fact, is the great importance which is attached to the celebration of the divine office. The office is set forth as the work *par excellence* of the monk and his most important duty. It is the divine work, *opus divinum*,³ the divine duty, *officium divinum*.⁴ It should take precedence above all other, and when the hour set apart for its celebration comes everything must be left in order to hasten to the work of God, *opus Dei*.⁵

The arrangement of the divine office is regulated in its smallest details.

In winter—i.e., from November 1st to Easter—the monks rise at 2 o'clock in the morning in order to sing the vigils or night office.⁶

The vigils always have twelve Psalms, preceded by the verses *Deus in adiutorium meum intende*, and *Domine labia mea aperies*, by the third and ninety-fourth Psalms, and a hymn of St. Ambrose. After singing the first six Psalms and their anthems, a versicle is recited and the abbot gives the blessing to the readers, who read three lessons, each one followed by a respond. The third respond ends with the *Gloria Patri*, during which all stand up. These lessons are taken either from the Old or New Testament, or again from the writings of the Fathers or orthodox Doctors. The next six Psalms are sung with the *Alleluia*; a lesson taken from the Epistles of St. Paul is then recited, a versicle, and finally the litany *Kyrie eleison*. Thus ends the night office.⁷

In summer—i.e., from Easter to November 1st—the vigils

¹ *Regula*, lix.

² In the opening chapter of his *Rule*, St. Benedict speaks of wandering monks in terms which show his strong desire that they should be done away with.

³ *Regula*, xvi, xix.

⁴ *Id.*, viii, xliii.

⁵ *Id.*, xliii. Cf. xlvii. We find the expression *opus Dei* used to describe the office in the monastic Rules of Gaul at this period.

⁶ *Id.*, viii.

⁷ *Id.*, ix.

must be begun early enough to enable them to end at day-break. But as the nights are shorter, instead of three lessons, only one, taken from the Old Testament, is read, followed by a short respond. Nothing else in the office is changed.¹

On Sundays, both in winter and summer, the monks rise earlier, for the office is longer. It is composed of three nocturns. The first two have each six Psalms, followed by four lessons, with their responds in the same order as given above. In the third nocturn three canticles, drawn from the prophetic books at the abbot's choice, are recited, and four lessons from the Old Testament are read. At the end of the last respond the abbot intones the *Te Deum laudamus*, and when this has been sung he reads the Gospel, during which "all stand in reverence and fear." The abbot then adds the hymn *Te decet laus*, gives his blessing, and the morning office then begins.²

The order for the vigils of saints and feasts is the same as for Sundays, with this difference, that the Psalms, anthems, and lessons are connected as much as possible with the feast celebrated.³ The matutinal office⁴ is so called by St. Benedict because it begins at daybreak, *incipiente luce*.⁵

On Sunday this office consists of four Psalms—the sixty-sixth without anthem, then the fiftieth with *Alleluia*, then the hundred and seventeenth and the sixty-second. Then comes the *Benedicite*, the *Lauds*—i.e., the last three Psalms of the Psalter, a lesson from the Apocalypse with one respond, an Ambrosian hymn, a versicle, the Gospel canticle *Benedictus*, and finally the litany *Kyrie eleison*.⁶

On week-days the third and fourth Psalms of the matutinal office change with the ferias; it has also a canticle from the prophecies in the place of the *Benedicite*.⁷

The day hours, which are sanctified by reciting the office, are *Prime*, *Tierce*, *Sext*, *None*, *Vespers*, and *Compline*, which, with the addition of *Lauds*, the matutinal office, carry out fully the words of the Psalmist: *Seven times in the day have I given praise to Thee* (Ps. cxviii. 164).⁸ These different hours had long been fixed by the Roman custom.

The four lesser hours comprise the verse *Deus in adjutorium meum intende*, a hymn, three Psalms, a lesson, a versicle, and the *Kyrie eleison*. At Vespers four Psalms with anthems are recited, then a lesson with a respond, an Ambrosian hymn, a versicle, the canticle *Magnificat*, the litany *Kyrie eleison*, and the Lord's Prayer.⁹ St. Benedict places the Lord's Prayer at the end of Vespers and at the

¹ *Regula*, x.

² *Regula* xi. This matutinal office corresponds with the present canonical hour of *Lauds*: the vigils to our *Matins*.

³ *Id.*, xiv.

⁴ *Id.*, xii: *matutinarum solemnitas*, the morning office.

⁵ *Id.*, viii.

⁶ *Id.*, xii.

⁷ *Id.*, xiii.

⁸ *Id.*, xvi.

⁹ *Id.*, xvii.

end of the matutinal office to obtain forgiveness for the petty offences which may arise daily in the monastery.¹

At Compline three Psalms without an antiphon are recited; then follows the hymn, a lesson, a versicle, the *Kyrie eleison*, and the blessing.²

Each of the day hours is celebrated separately, the community therefore assembling seven times daily in the oratory for the divine office; and at the end of each hour the abbot dismisses the assembly, *missae sint*, as stated in the Rule.³

St. Benedict provided for every detail of the divine office; he settled the order in which the Psalms were to be recited during the week, and stated the times at which *Alleluia*⁴ must be sung. Nothing is left to choice.

This great care which was bestowed upon the liturgy of the divine office did not hinder the Abbot of Monte Cassino from forming the souls of his monks by inculcating in them the spirit in which they must sing the psalmody.

"We believe that the divine Presence is everywhere, and that the eyes of the Lord behold the good and evil in every place. Especially should we believe this, without any doubt, when we are assisting at the work of God. Let us, then, ever remember what the prophet saith: *Serve the Lord in fear* (Ps. ii. 11); and again: *Sing ye wisely* (Ps. xlv. 8); and: *In the sight of the angels I will sing praises unto Thee* (Ps. cxxxvii. 1). Therefore, let us consider how we ought to behave ourselves in the presence of God and of His angels, and so assist at the divine office that our mind and our voice may accord together."⁵

Respect, humility, purity of heart, and compunction, such are the dispositions needful for prayer to be good. When we ask a favour from the mighty on earth we tender our request humbly and with deference. Ought we not, then, with much more reason, to act in the same way towards God?⁶

The Benedictine Rule also punishes severely any negligence, however slight, in the celebration of the divine office. The monk who makes a mistake in singing a Psalm, a respond, an anthem, or in reading a lesson, must publicly ask pardon if he desires to escape a more serious penance. Children guilty of such faults must be chastised.⁷

Those who came late to the office—that is to say, after the first Psalm, are not allowed to take their places in choir. They must go to the last row, where a place is reserved for late-comers, and after the office they must make public reparation for their fault.⁸

¹ *Regula*, xiii.

² *Id.*, xvii.

³ *Id.*, xvii. The word *missa*, as everyone knows, means, etymologically, *the dismissal*.

⁴ *Id.*, xviii, xv.

⁵ *Id.*, xix.

⁶ *Id.*, xx.

⁷ *Id.*, xlv.

⁸ *Id.*, xliii.

The monks who work too far from the oratory to be able to get there recite the different day hours where they work. Those on a journey are not dispensed from the office, which must be recited as they travel.¹

The singing of the divine office is the real prayer of the Benedictine monk. Nevertheless, St. Benedict provided for private prayer, which he desired to be short and fervent. Like St. Augustine, he enacted that the oratory be not put to any profane use, so that religious who wished to come and pray there out of office time could do so.²

Every day, after the evening meal, whether it be the second or the only meal of the day, a fast-day or not, the monks assemble to listen to pious reading, taken either from the *Conferences* of Cassian or from the *Vitae Patrum*.³ At certain times, no doubt, an exhortation from the abbot took the place of the reading.

In conformity with monastic traditions of the East, St. Benedict orders his monks to do manual labour and to read. Both are regulated with equal care. Each day the religious must read for two hours; on Sunday all time not taken up by the office is devoted to reading or meditation. Two monks, chosen from the older ones, are charged with the duty of going round the monastery during the time of reading to make sure that nobody omits this exercise. Those incapable of reading must do something else and not remain idle.⁴ From these injunctions in the Rule of its founder the Benedictine Order has acquired that love of study which has made it so illustrious and has enabled it to render such great service to learning.

St. Benedict is careful to remove all occasion for discontent as regards material things. He lays down that each one should have what is necessary both in the way of food and clothing. This necessity varies according to temperaments. At table, also, the food should be sufficient to satisfy, in a reasonable way, the appetites of all.⁵ In this connection St. Benedict recalls the principle laid down by St. Augustine for the religious women of Hippo; he who has greater need than others should humble himself on account thereof, and he that has less return thanks to God.⁶

When the monks are not fasting they take two meals in the day: the *prandium* at midday and the *coena* in the evening. On fast days the one meal is ordered to be at three

¹ *Regula*, l.

² *Id.*, lii.

³ *Regula*, xlii. The *Rule* indicates that a meditation should be made by the monks after the vigils, when they end before the time for Lauds (viii). It is not known what it was.

⁴ *Regula*, xlvi.

⁵ *Regula*, xxxix to xli. St. Benedict also enacts that monks must not be overworked in order to avoid discontent.

⁶ *Id.*, xxxiv.

o'clock in the afternoon; in Lent it is postponed until the evening.¹

In the refectory silence must be rigorously observed, and at mealtimes there must always be reading aloud.²

The wardrobe is in common. St. Benedict is here found to adopt the rigid communism which St. Augustine imposed at Hippo. The monks are strictly forbidden to have personal property: *omnia omnibus sint communia*.³

The religious sleep preferably in dormitories, where mutual supervision is more easy and rising for the vigils better assured. They are ordered to sleep fully clothed, and where possible in the one dormitory.⁴ St. Benedict does not wish separate cells. A specially strict silence must be observed after Compline until the next day.⁵

The directions in the Rule of St. Benedict respecting the taking of journeys, the care of the sick in the community, and the reception of guests,⁶ are similar to those laid down by St. Pachomius and St. Basil.

The exceptional honour with which guests are to be welcomed in Benedictine monasteries is worthy of note. The guest is to be received as Christ Himself, who will say at the day of judgement: "*I was a stranger and you took Me in*" (Matt. xxv. 35). The prior or the community come and salute him with profound bows or even with prostrations (*prostrato omni corpore in terra*), to adore Christ in the person of the guest. He is taken to the oratory for prayer, is given the kiss of peace, his hands and feet are washed. He is received at the abbot's table, and, unless it be a greater fast day, the abbot may break the fast in his honour. One of the monks is told off to wait upon the guest during his stay in the monastery.⁷

Such generous hospitality, offered by Benedictine monks, responded to a crying need of the time. Social conditions, owing to the invasion of barbarians, rendered travelling very laborious and dangerous. St. Benedict directs those monks who are about to travel specially to recommend themselves to the abbot and brethren; each day at the end of office they should be prayed for, that they may be preserved from all danger.⁸

The articles of the Benedictine Rule containing sanctions are inspired by the enactments of St. Basil. The monk who frequently offends in a pronounced manner against the Rule

¹ *Regula*, xli. Wednesdays and Fridays from Pentecost to September 3, and every day from September 3 to Easter are fast-days. There is no fasting during Eastertide.

² *Regula*, xxxviii.

³ *Id.*, xxxiii, lv.

⁴ *Id.*, xxii. This enactment is found in almost all rules of this period.

⁵ *Id.*, xlii.

⁶ *Id.*, lxvii, xxxvi, liii.

⁷ *Id.*, liii.

⁸ *Id.*, lxvii.

must be publicly reprimanded. If he will not amend he is to be excommunicated—that is to say, he is entirely isolated from the community for a fixed period.¹ St. Benedict, following St. Pachomius, orders, for those who are particularly incorrigible, the punishment of corporal chastisement.² If they are incapable of amendment nothing remains but to expel them from the monastery.³

St. Benedict totally omits the Oriental classification of vice under eight heads. The virtues which he recommends in his Rule as being most necessary for the life of the cloister are obedience,⁴ silence,⁵ and humility, of which last the twelve degrees are adapted to the different circumstances of monastic life.⁶ Finally, he sums up all the teaching of religious perfection in seventy-two maxims, taken from holy Scripture, which the monks are exhorted to follow unceasingly. These maxims are “the instruments of good works and the certain means of sanctification.”⁷

At the time St. Benedict was founding his house at Monte Cassino several of his contemporaries were drawing up Rules for the monasteries they themselves were founding in Italy.

The abbots Paul and Stephen, concerning whom we have scanty information, have left us a fairly complete Rule for monks,⁸ in which are found minute instructions as to the way to sing the divine office worthily. They were inspired by ancient monastic traditions, and largely from the writings of St. Augustine. They agree on many points with the Benedictine Rule.

But the most important monastic legislator in Italy after St. Benedict was Cassiodorus. Born in Calabria about the year 477 of a well-known family, Cassiodorus was chief minister to King Theodoric and consul in 514. About 540 he left the court in order to retire to the monastery which he had founded near his native place at *Vivarium*, in southern Italy. There he gave himself up to prayer and study and composed his famous *Institutions of divine and profane Writings*,⁹ in which he demonstrates the agreement and unity between sacred and profane sciences. Cassiodorus was a great lover of literature and classical antiquity. He directed his monks to give themselves up to the study of Christian writers with-

¹ *Regula*, xxiii, xxiv.

² *Id.*, xxviii.

³ *Id.*, xxix.

⁴ *Id.*, vi, lxviii.

⁵ *Id.*, vi, xlii.

⁶ *Id.*, vii

⁷ *Id.*, iv.

⁸ *Regula ad monachos* in forty-one articles (P.L. LXVI, 951-958). The celebration of the office is called *opus Dei*.

⁹ P.L. LXX, 1005 *seqq.* Cassiodorus also composed commentaries on the Psalms, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles. He is also the author of an *Ecclesiastical History* (P.L. LXIX to LXX).

out neglecting the treasures of profane literature. He himself set the example in his *Institutions*, which became the handbook of the schools of the earlier Middle Ages. Cassiodorus thus greatly contributed to the monastic idea of copying the literary masterpieces of antiquity. With St. Benedict, he has deserved well, not only of Christian letters, but also of profane.

II.—MONASTIC LEGISLATION IN GAUL—THE RULES OF ST. CAESARIUS, ARCHBISHOP OF ARLES, AND ST. COLUMBANUS, ABBOT OF LUXEUIL: OTHER RULES DERIVED FROM THESE—THE COMMON LIFE OF CLERKS—ST. CHRODEGANG OF METZ

IN the sixth and seventh centuries many monastic Rules were drawn up in Gaul. They occupy a considerable place in the *Collection of Monastic Rules* of St. Benedict of Aniane. But very few of them were original. For the most part they depend on the Rules of St. Caesarius, St. Columbanus, and, above all, of St. Benedict. In order to understand the special features of monastic life in Gaul at this period it is preferable to study the Rules of the Archbishop of Arles and the Abbot of Luxeuil.

St. Caesarius was born in 470 at Chalon-sur-Saône. Whilst still young he entered the monastery of Lerins. Forced through ill health to leave, he settled at Arles, where he became abbot of a monastery which had been founded by Bishop Eonius. In 502 he was raised to the dignity of Bishop of Arles.¹ Caesarius was a wonderful preacher of the ethics of the Gospel and reformer of ecclesiastical discipline. During the forty years of his episcopate it may be said that he was the defender of Christian civilization in southern Gaul against the barbarian invasions.

St. Caesarius drew up two Rules, one for monks and the other for the religious women of his episcopal town.² The first is the shorter; it consists of only twenty-six articles. Caesarius reproduced it entirely in his Rule for women, which is much more elaborate and which appears to have been the more esteemed work.³ It is the latter Rule to which the Archbishop of Arles owes his reputation as monastic legislator, and for many centuries it successfully competed with the Benedictine Rule in the monasteries of women.

The elements of this Rule are drawn from Lerins, where

¹ *Vita S. Caesarii Arel.*, cap. i, ii (P.L. LXVII, 1002 *seqq.*).

² *Regula ad monachos* (P.L. LXVII, 1099-1104); *Regula ad virgines* (1107-1120).

³ It is composed of forty-four articles. St. Caesarius has made a summary.

Caesarius had lived, from *Letter CCXI* of St. Augustine to the religious women of Hippo and from the customs of Gaul.¹

Like St. Augustine, Caesarius enacts that his religious must abandon their worldly goods on entering the monastery, either by giving them to the poor or by offering them to the community, "for without this precaution the religious cannot arrive at perfection." Novices, therefore, were not allowed to receive the habit, even though the time of probation had elapsed, unless all possessions had been given up.

The sisters must possess everything in common, even clothing, all of which must be made in the monastery and be extremely simple. It may be recalled that St. Augustine based his idea of monastic life on the conception of the holy communism of the primitive Church of Jerusalem.

The recommendations concerning custody of the eyes, indifference as to employment, fraternal correction, obedience without murmur, concord between the sisters, sins of the tongue, and respect and submission due to superiors, are borrowed, at times word for word, from St. Augustine. And the same must be said of the counsels of prudence and wisdom given to the abbess.

Caesarius forbids his religious to have separate cells. He desires them to be everywhere and at all times in community. He had imposed this on his monks also.²

The moral state of society at that time, when the barbarian element preponderated, made strict enclosure of convents for women a necessity. St. Caesarius is very severe on this subject. The religious, on entering the monastery, binds herself never to go outside "if she would, by the grace of God, escape the jaws of the wolf." Her family might come and visit her, but in the place set apart for such visitors (*salutatorium*). The religious went there accompanied by an older sister. It was strictly forbidden for anyone to enter the monastery. Only the clergy for liturgical service, and workmen for urgent repairs, could come in, on condition that the abbess was present and also the "provisor," who was responsible for the temporal affairs of the monastery. No stranger was allowed to take food in the house.

The same restrictions are to be found in all the Rules for convents of women in the centuries which followed.

St. Caesarius forbids his women to act as godmothers at baptisms. His monks also were forbidden to act as godfathers.

Baths were forbidden except for the sick.

¹ "*Eligimus pauca de pluribus*" says Caesarius at the beginning of his Rule.

² This enactment is in most of the monastic Rules of this period, as also the vow of stability as a condition of admission to a monastery for men. St. Caesarius requires this as well as St. Benedict (*Regula ad monachos*, cap. i).

The fasts laid down for the women were, with very slight difference, the same as those in the Rule for monks,¹ but the abbess could modify them when health required it.

There was always reading out loud at mealtimes. The sisters were to pray and meditate on the word of God during their daily work, and, in order that holy thoughts might not be lacking, one or two hours' reading were ordered for each morning;² also, all the religious were obliged to learn to read.

The night office was obligatory for the women as it was for the monks of Arles.

St. Caesarius does not give many details as to the composition of the divine office, the *opus Dei*, celebrated at Arles. His second successor, Aurelian (545), is more explicit. Childebart, King of the Franks, had founded, about 544, at Arles, two new monasteries, one for monks and another for nuns. Aurelian gave to each of them a Rule, which was practically, with hardly any addition, the monastic Rule of St. Caesarius.³

A special feature of the night office, or vigil, in southern Gaul, were the *missae*, or lessons, followed by prayer, which took place after singing the nocturns. On Sundays there were six *missae*;⁴ on other days two or three. The number of Psalms recited at the lesser hours was much greater than in the Benedictine Rule—i.e., twelve instead of three. Students of liturgical music will find, also, in these monastic Rules many interesting details concerning the way the psalmody was rendered.⁵

The monastic customs of Ireland were introduced into Gaul by St. Columbanus.⁶

Born in Ireland about 540, Columbanus felt an early call to the monastic life. He entered the severe abbey of Bangor,⁷ where he practised the life of renunciation with the dauntless

¹ From Easter to the month of September the monks fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays; from September to Christmas every day; from Christmas to the second week before Lent, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (*Regula ad monachos*, xxii). The punishments for monks who broke the rule were excommunication and confinement (xxiii).

² The monks of Arles studied each morning until *Tierce* and after that gave themselves up to manual labour (*Regula ad monachos*, xiv).

³ The Rule for monks comprised fifty-five articles (P.L. LXVIII, 387-398), that for the nuns about forty (399-406).

⁴ St. Caesarius, *Regula ad monachos*, xxi; St. Aurelian (P.L. 394).

⁵ At Uzès, in Narbonne, in the neighbourhood of Arles, Bishop Ferréol drew up, in 558, a *Regula ad monachos* for the monastery of St. Ferréol, martyr. This rule comprises twenty-nine chapters (P.L. LXVI, 959-976). One peculiarity was that the abbot of the monastery worked in the kitchen and waited at table on Christmas Day, Easter Day, and on the feast of the patron of the abbey, St. Ferréol.

⁶ Cf. E. Martin, *Dictionnaire de Théol. Cath.*, tom III, 370 seqq.

⁷ The monasteries of Ireland were celebrated for their severity. We find, possibly, a reproduction of the Rule of Bangor in the *Regula cuiusdam Patris ad monachos* (P.L. LXVI, 987-994). The resemblance of this Rule with that of St. Columbanus is most striking.

courage and rigour which were his characteristics. In 590 he left Ireland with twelve companions from Bangor, went into Gaul, and founded the monasteries of Annegray, Fontaine, and Luxeuil in Burgundy. He remained in the last named. Twenty years later he was driven from Luxeuil by Queen Brunehaut, whose anger was kindled by the reprimands which her evil conduct had drawn from him. Columbanus tarried for two years at Brégenz, near Lake Constance, and finally passed into Italy, where he built a monastery at Bobbio. It was there that he ended his unrestful life.

The Rule which St. Columbanus drew up for his monks of Luxeuil soon became famous. For two centuries it guided the monastic life of northern Gaul and German Switzerland. Nevertheless, it was not perfect, and its success arose less from its intrinsic value than from the renown and holiness of its author.

It lacked that moderation which is indispensable for the governing and leading of men; the temperament of St. Columbanus, austere even to harshness, was too much reflected therein. Nor was it sufficiently precise and practical. It consisted rather in a summary of monastic perfection¹ than a collection of regulations providing for the daily exercises and the sundry duties of monks. Such details do not seem to have been committed to writing. They therefore depended, at least in part, on the will of the abbot, which has its obvious objections.

The most clearly defined duties are those regulating the celebration of the office. The liturgical hours are the same as those of the Benedictine Rule, but the office, as regards its length, approaches more closely to the monasteries of Arles. In summer the vigil comprised thirty-six Psalms with antiphons and a hymn and lessons; in winter there were seventy-five Psalms.²

St. Columbanus was not content that his monks should aim at a common perfection, which is all that can be looked for collectively. He almost always insisted on a higher perfection. Furthermore, he was inclined to be as severe with his monks as he was towards himself.

The second part of his *Rule* includes several chapters dealing with punishments, in which are enumerated, this time with precision, all the faults against monastic discipline,

¹ The first ten chapters deal with *obedience, silence, food, poverty, vanity, chastity, the divine office, discretion, mortification, and the perfection of the monk* (P.L. LXXX, 209-216).

² *Regula S. Columboni*, cap. vii. At the end of each psalm all the monks prostrated themselves, saying: "O Lord, make haste to help me; O Lord, make speed to save me." It is known that St. Patrick, apostle of Ireland, used to make a great number of genuflections when reciting the psalms. It was, furthermore, a common custom in both East and West, from the fourth century onward, to prostrate oneself after each psalm.

³ P.L., 216 224. These follow the ten chapters mentioned above.

together with the punishment inflicted. These corrections consisted of chastisement with the rod,¹ to which were added days of fasting on bread and water, imprisonment, and, in case of any very serious fault, expulsion. So severe a form of government was not destined to last; even before the Benedictine Rule had finally superseded it the Rule of the famous Irish abbot had been considerably modified in order to render it endurable. By his eminent sanctity and his zeal and other natural gifts the Abbot of Luxeuil was able to carry men away; but he had not the wisdom of a legislator.²

St. Columbanus and his disciples were the apostles of private confession in Gaul, as St. Basil and the Greek monks had been in the East. In order to guide confessors in the fulfilment of this difficult task, the founder of Luxeuil drew up a penitentiary,³ in which, side by side with each offence, was appended the penance deserved, which was as nearly as possible proportioned to the circumstances of the case.

In the sixth century, again, we find another Rule for monks, which seems unconnected with any other; it is the *Regula monasterii Tarnatensis*.⁴ This monastery was situated on the banks of the Rhine, but the exact spot is not known.

The monks, herein differing from the other Rules, had separate cells. They daily gave to reading and meditation two hours, in which they were free from manual work and the divine office. They were formally forbidden to attend wedding feasts.⁵

Up till the seventh, and during the following century, the monastic Rules drawn up in Gaul were hardly other than adaptations to local use of the Rules of St. Caesarius, St. Columbanus, and above all St. Benedict.⁶

One of these adaptations deserves attention, because it

¹ At Arles certain breaches of discipline were punished by chastisement. But this form of correction was used more moderately than at Luxeuil. Cf. *S. Aureliani regula ad monachos*, xli.

² The monastic rules inspired by St. Columbanus are noted for their severity. Cf. *Regula cujusdam Patris ad virgines* (P.L. LXXXVIII, 1053-1070).

³ P.L. LXXX, 223-230. These penitentiaries were numerous in the Middle Ages.

⁴ P.L. LXVI, 977-986. It consisted of twenty-three chapters, of which several appear to have been inspired by Letter CCXI of St. Augustine.

⁵ A prohibition found reproduced in many Rules.

⁶ St. Donatus, Bishop of Besançon, and formerly a monk of Luxeuil, founded, in 624, a monastery for women in his episcopal town. The Rule which he gave them was a reproduction of the traditions of Luxeuil, Arles, and Monte Cassino (P.L. LXXXVII, 273-298). The unknown author of the *Regula magistri ad monachos* (P.L. LXXXVIII, 943-1052) paraphrases the Benedictine Rule. He probably lived in Gaul in the seventh century.

brings to our notice a particular form of monasticism, that of the recluses.

In the early Middle Ages in the West are to be found a considerable number of monks, who, in imitation of the Eastern solitaries of the fourth and fifth centuries, lived in complete seclusion. A priest named Grimlaïc, himself a recluse, drew up a Rule¹ for them, which was practically a reproduction of St. Benedict's text. He lived in Gaul, or in the Rhenish Provinces, in the ninth or tenth century, at which period the Benedictine Rule had been imposed on every monastery.

The anchorites, for whom Grimlaïc provided a Rule, no longer fixed their dwellings in the desert, but in the vaults below the monasteries. They dwelt in narrow cells attached to the monks' church, communicating therewith by means of a window, so that they could follow the offices, hear Mass, and receive Communion. When the recluse was a priest he had in his cell a private oratory for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice.²

Sometimes two recluses were found in the same cell, but they were obliged to maintain habitually a strict silence. As a rule, however, there was only one in each cell; the cells in that case were near enough together to enable the religious to exchange holy thoughts through the windows. The absolute isolation of anchorites was discouraged as being beyond human strength.³

Authorization to live as an anchorite was given by the abbot of the monastery and by the bishop of the diocese. It is easy to understand that it was not readily granted. A difficult probation of one year preceded retirement. If the postulant persevered in his desire, on the day arranged he prostrated himself in the oratory in the presence of the bishop and the monks, and then returned to his cell, of which the door was then sealed and even sometimes walled up. The episcopal seal was attached in order to prevent deceit.⁴

In his cell the anchorite gave himself up to the contemplative life, which Grimlaïc so well describes as follows:

"The lover of the contemplative life must unite himself with God his creator with all his heart in order to receive light. He must serve Him with care by contemplation and with the insatiable desire of rejoicing in Him. He must love Him with an ever-growing love, and fly, out of love for Him, from all that might make him turn away. All his thoughts and affections must be directed to the divine love. He must

¹ *Regula solitariorum* (P.L. CIII, 575-664). Nothing is known of the life of Grimlaïc except that he was a priest and a recluse. His Rule contains sixty-nine chapters.

² *Regula solitariorum*, cap. xvi, xxxvi.

³ *Id.*, xvi, xvii.

⁴ *Regula solitariorum*, xv. There were also recluses in monasteries for women.

meditate unceasingly upon the Holy Scriptures, and therein he will find a heavenly charm. He must behold himself in them as in a bright mirror, to amend those things within him which he sees are amiss, to foster that which is good, to preserve that which is healthy, and to strengthen that which is weak. He must study untiringly the commandments of the Lord. He must love them with an unutterable love and wholly fulfil them; for by them he is taught what he has to avoid and what to do. He must examine deeply the mysteries in Holy Writ; there he will find Christ promised and fulfilled. . . . Far from the turmoil of the world, the anchorite will only have thought for that which fires his heart with the desire of heavenly reward. . . . He must regard the world as dead for him, and must ever appear as crucified to the seductions and pleasures of time. He must infinitely prefer the contemplation of his Creator, whom he must strive to reach by unceasing progress, to that joy which is brought by the spectacle of present things. Never, even for a moment, must he turn away his eyes from heaven to let them wander back to earth. . . .

"That which is earthly and temporal must cause him neither fear nor yearning; his heart must not be stirred by fear at the loss of earthly goods here below, nor by the desire of acquiring them. Flattery must not seduce him nor vexation deject him. . . . In prosperity and in adversity he must possess his soul in unruffled calm."¹

It is only possible to reach the contemplative life after long practising Christian virtues in the active life and enduring every trial. For in order that the soul may be capable of being united with God to the extent of being taken up unceasingly with Him, it must be completely purified.²

In the eighth century St. Chrodegang, Bishop of Metz (766) was a restorer of the common life, the *vita canonica*, as it was then called, among the secular clergy. As St. Eusebius of Vercelli, St. Martin of Tours, and St. Augustine had done before him, he obliged the clergy of his episcopal city to live in community. He drew up a Rule³ for them inspired by that of St. Benedict. It prescribed a common dwelling, table, and dormitory. The singing of the divine office was to take place at the traditional hours both of day and night. Manual work was obligatory, as also was the taking of turns in the service of the kitchen. The clergy of many cathedral churches and ecclesiastics of a large number of important parishes adopted the Rule and formed communities of *canons regular*, which later on became the chapters of cathedral and collegiate

¹ *Regula solitariorum*, xii. Cf. viii.

² *Id.*, ix.

³ *Chrodegangi regula can.*, ed. W. Schmitz. 1889.

churches. The reform undertaken by St. Chrodegang did not last. The clerks, whilst living in community, kept their property and the right to the use of their possessions. The difference of fortune between them was an obstacle to the common life. In the tenth century the work of St. Chrodegang was almost extinct.

III.—THE SPANISH MONASTIC RULES: THE RULE OF THE ARCHBISHOPS OF SEVILLE, ST. LEANDER, AND ST. ISIDORE: THE RULE OF ST. FRUCTUOSUS OF BRAGA

ST. LEANDER, the eldest brother of St. Isidore, was Archbishop of Seville from about 584 to 600. He had the glory of wresting the Visigoths of Spain from Arianism. Leander left a Rule for convents of women; it is little more than an exhortation addressed to his sister Florentina on the duties of religious.¹ The counsels given are similar to those which have already been noticed in other writings of this kind.

Far more famous is the *Rule for Monks* drawn up by St. Isidore,² the brother of Leander, and the restorer of learning in Spain. St. Isidore occupied the archiepiscopal see of Seville until 636. He presided at the fourth Council of Toledo in 633.

St. Isidore had been a monk before he became archbishop. He wrote his Rule for a monastery in the Province of Baetica, now Andalusia.

The Rule of St. Isidore contains many enactments which are common to the other Rules. According to the preface, it was drawn up after comparing the ancient monastic traditions with the more recent writings on the subject. St. Benedict's Rule is not mentioned by name, but it was doubtless known to St. Isidore.

The Rule of St. Isidore, however, is distinguished from the others in several points. It orders that the monastic enclosure must be rigidly observed; only one door must give access to the convent, and must be well guarded.³

Every year, on the feast of Pentecost, all the religious had to renew their vow of poverty, and to promise to keep nothing for themselves which they might receive from outside. For that which a monk acquires is not for himself, but for the monastery. The religious also were obliged to confess to the abbot any important faults.⁴

During divine office, at the end of each Psalm, probably at

¹ *Regula S. Leandri, seu Liber de institutione virginum et contemptu mundi ad Florentinam sororem* (P.L. LXXII, 873-894).

² *Sancti Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi regula monachorum* (P.L. CIII, 555-572). It comprises twenty-three chapters.

³ *Isidori regula*, i.

⁴ *Id.*, v, xiv.

the *Gloria Patri*, the religious prostrated themselves on the ground in adoration of God.¹

Three times a week, after Tierce, the abbot called the monks together and gave them a conference (*collatio*). Each day at Prime manuscripts were distributed for reading. These had to be returned in the evening to the one who had charge of them.² In the mind of St. Isidore, the monastery was to be a retreat for learning.

Finally, prayer for the dead was strongly inculcated. The eucharistic sacrifice was offered for monks who died, before burying them. All the dead were buried in the one cemetery, "that those who had been united by charity when alive might be brought together in one place after their death." Every year, the day after Pentecost, the holy sacrifice was offered for the souls of all the monks of the monastery who had died.³

Some years after St. Isidore, Spain had another somewhat celebrated legislator of monastic life—viz., St. Fructuosus, Archbishop of Braga. Given up from early years to the religious life, Fructuosus founded many religious houses, amongst others the monastery of Complutum, in Castille, for which he drew up a Rule, which was inspired by that of St. Benedict.⁴

IV.—THE MONASTIC WORK OF ST. BENEDICT OF ANIANE IN THE NINTH CENTURY

THE extraordinary development of monastic life in the West was not effected without difficulties. Indeed, it was not an easy task to make amenable to religious discipline recruits from the semi-barbarous population of the West. The severity of some Rules may be accounted for, at least in part, by the necessity to check these uncultured and sensual natures.

To these difficulties, incidental to the government of abbeys, were soon added others which came from without. The lands which the monks had redeemed, or which had been given them by princes, rendered certain monasteries extremely rich. Superabundance of worldly possessions is always a great danger for religious houses. It proved fatal to the

¹ *Isidori regula*, vii.

² *Id.*, viii, ix.

³ *Id.*, xxiii.

⁴ *Regula monachorum* (P.L. LXXXVII, 1099-1110). Another Rule (*Regula monastica communis*, P.L. 1111-1130) is attributed to St. Fructuosus, to regulate monasteries composed, no longer of individuals, but of families. Married people were admitted there with their children, provided the latter were not more than seven years old. But the men and boys lived on one side under the direction of the abbot, and the women with their daughters on the other under an abbess. The monastic exercises were proportioned to suit this arrangement. The authenticity of this Rule has not been fully established.

monasteries after the eighth century by exciting the envy of laymen, several of whom managed to have themselves nominated as abbots. Charles Martel was the first to inaugurate the system of lay abbots. The religious fervour of the monasteries was thus shaken, and was only maintained thanks to the action of reformers whom God raised up from time to time.

One of those reformers at the beginning of the ninth century was St. Benedict of Aniane.

Born in 751 near Montpellier, in southern Gaul, Benedict was brought up in the court of Pepin le Bref, and was attached to the service of Charlemagne. Having become a monk, he founded, about the year 780, on the banks of the Aniane, in the country of his birth, the abbey to which he owes his surname.¹ He followed strictly the Benedictine Rule and brought about the revival of true monastic traditions.

The Abbey of Aniane exercised a happy influence on a great number of monasteries in Narbonne, and soon on others throughout the empire. It was by the advice of the Abbot of Aniane that the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle, called together in 817 by Louis le Debonnaire, obliged all the monasteries of the Frankish empire to adopt the Rule of St. Benedict. The reform thus effected was of exceptional importance.² Thanks thereto, the monastic institutions were able to continue their work until the great reform which was brought about in the tenth century by the Abbey of Cluny.

St. Benedict of Aniane died in 821; but not so his work. He left two writings, which had considerable influence on monastic life.

The first was a summary of the monastic Rules which had been composed before him.³ This summary is divided into three parts. The first contained the Oriental Rules, those of St. Pachomius and St. Basil, together with a large number of monastic phrases drawn from the *Vitae Patrum* and from the *History of Monks*, translated by Rufinus. The second part contained the Rules for monasteries of men, written in the West, and which we have just been studying. Finally, the third part dealt with Western Rules for monasteries of women. Luke Holstein, the editor of St. Benedict of Aniane's works, collects together in an appendix a certain number of homilies from the Fathers, addressed to monks or virgins, which the Abbot of Aniane had gathered together, but which were not in the body of the summary.

¹ Smaragdus (843), *Vita S. Benedicti Anianensis*, 1-10 (P.L. CIII, 355-358).

² *Id.*, 12 *segg.*

³ *Codex regularum monasticarum et canonicarum* (P.L. CIII, 423-702).

This *Summary of Rules* was certainly in the following centuries the monastic code which inspired all legislators and monastic reformers.

The other work of St. Benedict of Aniane was a *Concordance*¹ of all the ancient Rules with that of St. Benedict. With a view to adding to the authority of this Rule, which had just been imposed on all the monasteries, the Abbot of Aniane conceived the idea of annotating each of its chapters with similar passages collected from the older Rules. In this way the Rule of Monte Cassino became provided with the best of commentaries.

The Rules which have just been analyzed give a precise idea of Western monastic life at the end of the Patristic Era and at the beginning of the Middle Ages.

To the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience most of the founders of monasteries added the vow of stability, in order to suppress wandering monks.

Serfs were received into monasteries as well as free and rich men : they enjoyed the same rights, took upon themselves the same obligations, and obeyed the same Rule.

Faithful observance of the Rule was the chief duty of the monk and the highest means of sanctification. Monastic piety was nourished by the recitation of the divine office, study and meditation on the word of God. Confession purified souls from their sins, and eucharistic communion caused the divine life to grow and increase within them.

Two devotions were developed in the monasteries of this period, that of the Blessed Sacrament and that of the Blessed Virgin.

As Christian piety towards any one divine mystery increases, the attention of the teachers of the Church is directed thereto more narrowly. In the early Middle Ages, thanks to the fourth book of the dialogues of St. Gregory the Great, in which he speaks so much about the Mass, devotion to the Eucharist spread greatly. Furthermore, we find that Paschase Radbert, a monk, and afterwards Abbot of Corbie, in Gaul, in the ninth century, published a famous work *On the Body and Blood of the Lord*, and began a series of discussions with the monk Ratramnus, which resulted in bringing well to the fore the doctrine of transubstantiation.²

Intellectual life in the monasteries in the eighth and ninth centuries was highly developed. In Great Britain the Venerable Bede (735),³ a monk of Jarrow, attracted a number

¹ *Concordantia regularum Patrum* (P.L. CIII, 713-1380).

² These eucharistic studies were continued in the eleventh century by Lanfranc, Abbot of the monastery of Bec, in Normandy. In them he refuted the heresy of Berengarius.

³ See his works in P.L., XC to XCV.

of disciples by his fame and learning. One of them, Alcuin of York, whose ascetic writings will frequently be cited later on, was invited to the Frankish empire by Charlemagne, and, together with Paul the deacon, inaugurated there a great movement towards learning. At his request in 789, all monasteries were commanded to establish schools.¹

Learned monks studied more especially the writings of St. Augustine. It was through the study of his writings without proper discernment that the monk Gottschalk² put forward heterodox theories as to predestination, and thus provoked the lively controversies of the ninth century.

The Virgin Mary was held in veneration by the monks and nuns, chiefly as a model of incomparable purity. St. Caesarius of Arles, in his homilies, is at pains to bring out in high relief the virginity of the Mother of God and her freedom from all sin.

"Believe, my most dear brethren," he said, "that Christ . . . was born of the Virgin Mary, who was virgin before child-birth, who remained so ever after, and who was completely free from every stain and from every sin."³ In the monasteries of Gaul Mary was habitually regarded as the ideal of purity, and about the twelfth century the privilege of her immaculate conception was venerated.

The praises addressed to the Virgin, "who is above all praise," call to mind those which occur in the Greek lectionaries, and we may venture to assert that the devotion and tender piety towards Our Lady which are to be found so gloriously expressed in the cathedrals of the Middle Ages were chiefly fostered in the monasteries.

Confidence, also, in the powerful intercession of the Queen of all the Saints increased in the hearts of the monks. The Mother of God, incomparably holy, raised to heaven so gloriously at her assumption, and placed above angels and archangels, would never allow their prayers to remain unanswered. At Arles about 544 the Basilica attached to the monastery of nuns was dedicated in honour of the Virgin Mary,⁴ as though inviting all to come and pray there with the certain hope of being heard.

An ancient formula from such prayers addressed to Mary has come down to us. The special mention of monks and nuns therein is noteworthy.

O Virgo beata . . . succurre ergo miseris, juva pusil-

¹ P.L. CI, 643-656. *De virtutibus et vitiis; De animae ratione; De confessione peccatorum*. Alcuin has also left a work on hagiography (col. 655-724).

² Gottschalk was first an oblate of the monastery of Fulda, then a monk of Orbais near Soissons about 829. He was condemned in 848 at the Synod of Mayence.

³ *Sermo CCXLIV*, 1 (P.L. XXXIX, 2195).

⁴ *S. Aureliani regula ad virgines*, xiv, xxxviii.

*lanimes, remove flebiles, ora pro populo, interveni pro clero; intercede pro monachorum choro, exora pro devoto femineo sexu; sentiant omnes tuum levamen, quicumque devote celebrant tuum nomen.*¹

V.—THE WESTERN HAGIOGRAPHERS OF THE SIXTH CENTURY: ST. ENNODIUS OF PAVIA—EUGIPPIUS—ST. GREGORY OF TOURS AND FORTUNATUS

WESTERN hagiography of the sixth and following centuries is inferior to that of the East. The literary barrenness of this period is here made fully manifest.

St. Ennodius, Bishop of Pavia (521) has left two interesting biographies: the *Life of St. Epiphanius*, a Bishop of Pavia who died in 496, and the *Life of St. Antony*, monk of Lerins.²

Eugippius, abbot of a monastery in the neighbourhood of Naples, wrote, about 511, the *Life of St. Severinus*. He also drew up a collection of the ascetic sayings of St. Augustine, which was much valued in the centuries which followed.³

St. Gregory of Tours⁴ is, above all, known from his *History of the Franks*. He is, perhaps, a little too credulous, but, for all that, a hagiographer worthy of esteem.

The hagiographic collection of Gregory of Tours is usually referred to under the title *Of the Glory of the Martyrs* (*De gloria martyrum*). The writer himself entitles his work *Books of Miracles*,⁵ because it was his desire to give an account of the miracles performed by the holy men and women whose lives he writes. In reality neither of these titles adequately describes the collection, which consists of writings independent of one another and composed at different times.

The work⁶ starts with the book *Of the Glory of the Martyrs*, which recounts the miracles of our Saviour and of the Apostles and those of divers martyrs of Gaul, and especially the first preachers of the Gospel in that country.

The second book treats of *the miracles of St. Julian*, a martyr of Vienna, put to death in 304, whose tomb, situated at Brioude, was much frequented by pilgrims.

In the four following books St. Gregory gives an account

¹ *Sermo CCVIII: In festo assumptionis B. Mariae*, 11 (P.L. XXXIX, 2134). The same prayer with variations is again found in another sermon, *Sermo CXCIV*, 5 (P.L. XXXIX, 2107). It has become the well-known anthem in the Office of the Blessed Virgin: *Sancta Maria, succurre miseris*. . . .

² P.L. LXIII.

³ P.L. LXII.

⁴ Born at Clermont Ferrand in 538, Gregory was brought up by his maternal uncle St. Gall, Bishop of Clermont. He afterwards was attached to the court of Sigebert I, King of Austrasia, then he was nominated Bishop of Tours, where he died about 593.

⁵ *Cf. Historia Francorum*, X, 31.

⁶ P.L. LXXI, 705-1096.

of *The Miracles of St. Martin*. This work was undertaken partly from a desire to edify the faithful and also from gratitude. In 563, before being raised to the See of Tours, St. Gregory had been miraculously cured of a severe illness, through the great wonder-worker of Gaul.

Sulpicius Severus had already recounted the miracles wrought by St. Martin when alive. Paulinus of Perigueux,¹ about 470, was the historian of the posthumous miracles of the famous Bishop of Tours. St. Gregory undertook to write an account of the miracles which were wrought in his time.

The seventh book of St. Gregory's selections is entitled the *Life of the Fathers*, and is the most interesting part. It consists of twenty chapters, containing the biographies of twenty-two men and women, saints of the Gallican Church.

Finally, the eighth book, *Of the Glory of the Confessors*,² is a collection of miraculous legends, and of wonders worked at the tombs of holy persons buried in the Touraine and surrounding country.

The hagiographic³ work of St. Gregory of Tours was a great success. It edified the faithful and turned them from pagan fables, to which the people of Gaul, but recently converted to Christianity, were inclined to give credence. It contains most precious information on the devotion to the saints and the veneration of their relics in Gaul in the sixth century. Future writers, such as Surius and Bollandus, who undertook collections of the *Lives of the Saints*, made large use of the writings of St. Gregory of Tours.

Fortunatus⁴ is much more of a poet than a hagiographer. It was he who composed the two beautiful hymns, *Pange lingua gloriosi* and *Vexilla regis prodeunt*, which we sing in Passiontide.

He has left us, however, several well-authenticated⁵ biographies, written in prose, for the edification of the Christian people, from which hagiography has borrowed reliable information.

St. Gregory the Great, Pope, may to a certain extent be included amongst hagiographers. The three first books of his *Dialogues*⁶ contain accounts of miracles performed by

¹ *De vita S. Martini Episcopi libri VI* (P.L. LXI, 1009 seqq.).

² In Migne's Patrology this book is the third of the collection. It is placed after the book of *The Miracles of St. Julian*.

³ The book entitled *The Book of the Miracles of the Apostle St. Andrew* should also be added (P.L. LXXI, 1009-1102).

⁴ He was born about 530 in the environs of Treviso, in Northern Italy. He journeyed to Gaul and settled at Poitiers, near St. Radegund, about 570.

⁵ *Life of St. Hilary of Poitiers; Life of St. Marcellus, Bishop of Paris; Life of St. Albinus, Bishop of Angers; Life of St. Paternus, Bishop of Avranches; Life of St. Germanus of Paris; Life of St. Radegund* (P.L. LXXXVIII).

⁶ P.L. LXXVII, 149-317.

holy persons in Italy whom he had known or of whom he had heard. The second book is confined to St. Benedict of Nursia.¹ Few works have been copied or translated so much as the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory, which soon became known to the whole world. But the illustrious Pontiff has other claims on our interest in the history of spirituality.

VI.—THE LATIN ASCETICAL WRITERS AFTER THE FIFTH CENTURY: BOËTHIUS, ST. MARTIN OF BRAGA, AND ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

PERHAPS some surprise may be felt at finding the name of Boëthius in a history of spirituality. This philosopher was apparently a rather slack Christian, enjoying life to the full when fortune favoured him, and yet he exercised considerable influence on the asceticism of the Middle Ages. For he gave expression in poignant language to the nothingness of human happiness and the disenchantment of the heart of man, stripped of all through adversity.

Born in Rome about 480 of an illustrious family, consul in 510, the favourite of Theodoric the Great, Boëthius was one of fortune's favourites. Then came a sudden collapse. Unjustly accused of treason, he was thrown into prison at Pavia and put to death with terrible tortures in 524. It was in prison that he wrote his celebrated work, *On the Consolations of Philosophy*,² later to be so widely read and quoted by the authors of the *Meditations* of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In order to console himself, Boëthius asks philosophy to describe to him the futility of riches, which can only be amassed by impoverishing one's neighbour; of dignities, which are a source of weariness; of pleasures, which kill after they have charmed. Finally, "adversity is better for man than prosperity, for the latter lies and leads to error and vice: adversity shows things to be what they are and leads to truth and virtue."³

St. Martin, Bishop of Braga in Spain, and above all Pope St. Gregory the Great, may be said to be the only writers of the sixth and seventh centuries who have left us their works on spirituality.⁴

St. Martin, who at first was Abbot of the monastery at

¹ P.L. LXVI, 126-204.

² P.L. LXIII, 579-862. The work is divided into five books. It is drawn up in the form of a dialogue between Boëthius and Philosophy, and is most elegant in style. Verse alternates with prose.

³ *De consol. philosoph.*, lib. II, 5-8, III, 2-8.

⁴ The anonymous treatises inserted in Vol. XL of Migne's *Patrologie latine* appear to have been drawn up by writers of the twelfth, and even the thirteenth and fourteenth, centuries.

Dumio, near Braga, became, about 561, Bishop of Dumio and afterwards Archbishop of Braga, the place of residence of the Suevian kings. He had the glory of converting to Catholic orthodoxy the Suevian Arians, whose king, Miro, was much devoted to him.

According to Gregory of Tours,¹ St. Martin was very cultivated. He draws inspiration at times from both Plato and Seneca in his writings on morals and asceticism. These consisted of six small works, dedicated to King Miro,² which treat of moral questions rather than spirituality.

St. Gregory the Great, the last but glorious luminary of the Patristic Era in its decline, was born in Rome, about 540, of an illustrious patrician family. Like most of the churchmen of that time who left their mark on the period, Gregory was trained in the cloister.

Whilst still young he gave up a political career—he was Praetor of Rome—sold his enormous fortune for the relief of the poor, and founded seven monasteries—six in Sicily and another in Rome on the Coelian Hill, to which latter he retired. There he followed the Rule of St. Benedict.³ The Abbot of Monte Cassino had entirely captivated Gregory, who in the second book of the Dialogues became his famous panegyrist.

It was not long before the Popes compelled Gregory to leave his convent in order to create him regional cardinal, and afterwards nuncio at Constantinople. Finally, he was elected Pope in 590. In 604 he died.

St. Gregory's practical bent inclined him towards moral and canonical questions. Beyond everything he laboured to restore the religious life, which had been destroyed by constant social upheavals. It is to ordinary Christians, therefore, that he addresses his homilies on Ezechiel and on the Gospels;⁴ and also in his *Morals*, in which, in explaining the Book of Job, he sets forth the duties of the Christian life. The moral precepts of the Gospel are intermingled there with the rules of asceticism, in the same way as in the homilies of St. Augustine and the other Fathers of the Church.⁵

The only work on spirituality properly so called which

¹ *Historia Franc.*, V, 37, 38.

² The first, *Formula vitae honestae*, treats of the four cardinal virtues; the four others deal with *anger*, *boasting*, *pride*, and *humility* (P.L. LXXII, 21-50). St. Martin also composed sermons directed against the idolatrous practices of the Spanish peasants.

³ Paul the Deacon, *Sancti Gregorii Magni Vita*, I, 1-6 (P.L. LXXV, 41-44).

⁴ P.L. 785-1314. There are twenty-two homilies on Ezechiel and forty on the Gospels. These latter are often found quoted in the Breviary.

⁵ *Moralium libri XXXV sive expositio in librum B. Job* (P.L. LXXV, 509 to LXXVI, 782).

St. Gregory has left us is that of the *Dialogues*,¹ written in 593 and 594. One day the saintly Pope, longing with more than his usual home-sickness for the cloister, withdrew for some time into solitude, full of sadness at being turned from the care of his own salvation by the weight of business affairs, which pressed heavily upon him. One of his friends, the Deacon Peter, came and joined him.² St. Gregory, discoursing with him concerning some holy persons whose miracles he relates, makes certain observations on holiness, contemplation, and on Christian virtues.

The spiritual doctrine of St. Gregory does not differ from that of St. Augustine.

He agrees with the Bishop of Hippo that perfection, however high it may be, does not totally exclude little faults.³ Love of God and love of one's neighbour are the dominant notes, for love is essentially active, and manifests itself by more and more excellent works: *Probatio ergo dilectionis exhibitio est operis*.⁴ All the beautiful teaching on charity which we so admired in St. Augustine is again found in the homilies of St. Gregory the Great.

The same may be said of the theory of temptation. St. Gregory, however, dwells on this at great length, and, like an experienced casuist well versed in the weaknesses of the human heart, he points out the different states of soul which the tempter may bring about, and gives detailed advice for their detection.

When he speaks of Christ it is to give Him the first place in Christian piety.

But it is in pastoral theology that the personality of St. Gregory the Great is most made manifest. He himself was a perfect pastor of souls, and he devoted himself, either in his numerous *Letters*, or, above all, in his celebrated *Pastoral Rule*,⁵ to form good workmen for the ecclesiastical ministry.

The *Pastoral Rule* contains four parts, corresponding to the four duties of the true pastor. First of all, there must be "fear of the burden of the pastoral office and a clear under-

¹ P.L. LXXVII, 147-430. The full title is this: *Dialogorum libri IV, De vita et miraculis Patrum italicorum et de aeternitate animarum*. The fourth book contains an account of miraculous visions of the future life. St. Gregory there demonstrates the immortality of the soul.

² *Dialogorum*, I, *proemium*.

³ *Moralium*, V, cap. xxxiii.

⁴ *Homilia*, XXX, in *Evangelia*, lib. II (P.L. LXXXVI, 1220 *seqq.*).

⁵ *Regulae pastoralis liber* (P.L. LXXVII, 13-128). It is dedicated to John, Archbishop of Ravenna, who, in a friendly way, had reproached Gregory for having fled in order to escape the responsibilities of Sovereign Pontiff. It was written about 591. The *Pastoral* had an immense success in the Latin Church and even in the East, where it soon became known from a Greek translation.

standing of the qualifications required. Then, having been lawfully ordained without having sought it, it is needful to know what the life of a true pastor should be. Then come the rules for preaching, which must be learnt in order to teach Christian doctrine. Finally, the pastor must examine himself daily and thereby know his weakness, in order to avoid pride and the danger of living contrarily to the teaching he gives to others.¹

The first qualification which St. Gregory looks for from the pastor is knowledge. Nothing can be learnt without study; how much the more, therefore, the art of leading souls, which is the art of arts. *Ars est artium regimen animarum*. The art of healing souls does not come of itself any more than that of healing the body. The ignorant, therefore, must be eliminated from the sacerdotal ministry, for they are the blind who are incapable of leading others.

Certain men presume to insinuate themselves from ambition or from a taste for the honours of pastoral office. If they succeed it is without the call of God and without possessing the necessary virtue. The Sovereign Pastor does not know such, and one day He will judge and condemn them.

Others are perfectly instructed concerning divine truths, but their manner of life is in contradiction to their teaching. They scandalize souls, and if they but recall the terrible condemnations of the Saviour against those who give scandal they will never take upon themselves the mission of directing others. The care of souls is so formidable a ministry that those who are unworthy must not desire it, otherwise they become leaders guiding men to perdition.

Many may deceive themselves in this matter and believe that they only desire the honour of governing the faithful in order to perform a great work. But no sooner do they possess that which they coveted than all their grand projects fade away and they remain in their own misery. St. Gregory had seen the activities of many of these ambitious men around him, and describes their psychology with great shrewdness.²

After enumerating those who are unworthy of the pastoral office, St. Gregory gives a portrait of one who deserves to be raised thereto:

"The guidance of others should be confided to him who is totally dead to the passions of the flesh and whose life is wholly spiritual; who despises the advantages of this world and fears not adversity and gives importance only to those things which concern the soul . . . who does not covet the goods of others, but gives largely of his own; who is inclined

¹ *Regulae past.*, proemium.

² *Id.*, I, cap. i to xi. Cf. *In librum primum Regum*, cap. x.

to lenity through kindness, but without exaggeration or deviation from justice; who commits no evil, but weeps on account of that committed by others as though imputed to himself; who is heartily compassionate towards the weaknesses of another and rejoices at his happiness as at his own; who is for all so perfect an example that he has no need to blush for his deeds; who strives to live so perfectly that he is able to spread the dew of heavenly doctrine even on the driest hearts; who knows by long experience that prayer is able to obtain from the Lord that which is asked of Him.¹ . . ."

The pastor legitimately established should become noted for his great purity of intention, active zeal, perfect discretion, and gift of useful preaching. He must be wholly at his neighbour's service, without neglecting his own sanctification. His humility, his earnestness in recalling sinners without fear of displeasing man, his tact in dissembling the faults of his subordinates when prudence requires it, his assiduity in the study and meditation of the divine law, will make him appear, in the eyes of the faithful, the true pastor.²

Amongst the sacerdotal duties, those of preaching and fraternal correction are, perhaps, the most important, and are in any case the most difficult. On this subject St. Gregory gives detailed counsels based on experience, on the way to preach well and usefully exhort the different classes of the faithful according to their conditions and states of soul. Preachers and confessors of later centuries have found in the third part of the *Pastoral* most wise rules to guide them in their delicate work.

St. Gregory ends with an invitation addressed to the pastor not to neglect the care of his own soul in working for those of others.³ The *Pastoral* is in reality as much a code of sacerdotal holiness as a treatise on pastoral theology.⁴

¹ *Regulae past.*, I, cap. x.

² *Id.*, II, cap. i to xi.

³ *Id.*, IVa pars.

⁴ It is useful to cite here St. Ildefonsus, Bishop of Toledo (669), the author of a treatise on the *Perpetual Virginity of St. Mary* (P.L. XCVI, 53-110), in which, in an elegant style, he stigmatizes the errors of Helvidius, of Jovinian, and of the Jews of Spain, on the maternal virginity. Ildefonsus expresses his veneration, his love, and his filial piety towards Mary in terms of enthusiasm which call to mind the homilies on this subject by the Eastern preachers.

CHAPTER XII

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EASTERN MONASTICISM AFTER THE FIFTH CENTURY

MONASTERIES AND LAURAS—GREEK SPIRITUAL WRITERS OF THE SIXTH TO THE TENTH CENTURIES: HAGIO- GRAPHERS, ASCETICAL WRITERS AND MYSTICS, THE PANEGRISTS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

IN the East the discipline under which monasticism developed was not so steady as in the West.

The Rule of St. Pachomius and that of St. Basil secured good order in the monasteries; but unhappily these did not include all the monks. Amongst them were many who lived as hermits and ordered their lives independently of any monastery. Too often they were seen wandering in the towns or country, where they brought discredit on monasticism. Even those that lived in community could easily pass, without serious cause, from one convent to another.

This state of things, added to the mobile Oriental temperament, soon created difficulties. The Emperor Justinian was obliged to issue decrees compelling monks to live in monasteries. From the ninth century there were hardly any monks in the East, except in Basilian convents.

I.—EASTERN MONASTICISM AFTER THE FIFTH CENTURY IN THE PENINSULA OF SINAI, IN CONSTANTINOPLE, AND IN PALESTINE¹

In Egypt the controversies which arose in connection with the name of Origen created trouble in certain monastic centres.

In the desert of Nitria opposition to Origenist ideas was very marked, and many monks, in reaction against Alexandrian allegorism, became anthropomorphists. They protested, in 399, against the paschal letter of Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, which opposed the idea that God has a body.² Others of the monks, on the contrary, were

¹ PRINCIPAL SOURCES.—The numerous *Lives of Saints* to be cited.

² This opinion that God is not a pure spirit had considerable vogue among the monks of the deserts of Scete and Nitria. See Cassian, *Collatio*, x, 2, 3.

fervent admirers of Origen. The theories of the famous Doctor against matter and the resurrection of the body were held in particular esteem, for did they not look upon their own bodies as their greatest enemy? Thus, a writer who depreciated the body could not be other than attractive to them. Amongst these Origenist monks were to be found many influential persons, who gave considerable strength to the movement.

Theophilus thought it needful to intervene, more especially as his paschal letter might make him appear favourable to Origenist ideas. He therefore betook himself to the desert of Nitria, caused Origen to be condemned, and forbade his books to be read by the monks. Many of the monks refused to submit to the judgement of the patriarch. About three hundred of them must have quitted Egypt. They took refuge in Palestine, and several of them carried their grievances to Constantinople, where they obtained the aid and protection of the bishop, St. John Chrysostom. The latter took the view that the quarrel was in reality a persecution of the monks, and acted in so untoward a manner that it brought about his undoing. Accused of being on the side of Origen, St. John Chrysostom was deposed at the synod of The Oak, near Chalcedon, in 403, by Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, who conducted himself on that occasion with signal dishonesty. The threatening pressure of intriguing monks — was not without its influence on this iniquitous sentence.

The discussions on Origen began again in the sixth century in the convents of Palestine, where a violent struggle took place between the monks, which ended in the defeat of the supporters of the Origenist theories.

As to the Egyptian monasteries, if they continued for the most part hostile to Origen, they allowed themselves to become tainted with Monophysitism. This heresy deprived the Church, in the sixth century, of that part of the Empire which had given birth to monasticism, and where it had shone with such great brilliancy.¹

In the peninsula of Sinai, the monastery raised on the holy mountain, already made famous by St. Nilus, was rendered even more celebrated in the sixth century by St. John Climacus, the well-known author of *The Ladder of Paradise*.

Round and about the sacred mountain lived numerous hermits. For, contrary to the teaching of St. Basil, the doctrine of the superiority of the eremitical life over that of the cenobites still prevailed. It was judged necessary for novices and monks still imperfect to continue in the monasteries. Three distinctions were made between the monks from the point of view of perfection: the beginners, the

¹ The Egyptian Monophysites were called Copts.

intermediate, the wholly perfect.¹ The cenobitic life was insisted on for the first and second, but those religious who had so far advanced in the practice of virtue as to desire to unite themselves more closely to God and give themselves up to contemplation, retired from their convents into solitude.²

In the district surrounding Constantinople monasteries were greatly multiplied after the sixth century.³ But all the monks there did not lead the life of cenobites. Many lived as hermits in complete solitude,⁴ either in *lauras* or else dwelling in separate huts, but united under the authority of a common head, where they gave themselves up to prayer and manual work. They were called *Kelliotes*.⁵ In each convent and in each *laura* there was a superior, sometimes known as *Archimandrite*, and sometimes *Leader*, or *Hegoumenos*. A pastoral staff was the sign of his jurisdiction. The title of *Archimandrite* was, little by little, reserved for the superiors of the older and more important monasteries. The name *abbot* was given to all religious. The title *papas* began to be used very early to distinguish priests.⁶

There were also monasteries of women (*sanctimoniales*) and virgins. Men were strictly forbidden to enter, as also women were forbidden access to convents for men.⁷ "My children," said a holy religious of that time to his disciples, "the monk is like salt. Salt comes out of water and dissolves in contact with water; the monk is born of woman and loses himself by the absorbing contact with woman."⁸ According to monastic tradition, the occupations of the religious were prayer and manual work.

In the monastery of the *Irenaeon*, near Constantinople, the monks, under the influence of the sect of Massalians, suppressed work in order to give themselves up to unceasing prayer. Day and night, by distributed groups, they kept up perpetual psalmody, from which they received the name of *Akoimetoï*, or sleepless monks. This innovation was introduced into several monasteries of Constantinople. But the opposition against monks who did no work and laid themselves open to the abuse of public charity, prevented this new form of monasticism from increasing.

¹ St. John Climacus, *Scala Paradisi*, gradus 16.

² This is what St. John Climacus did himself and what he recommends in his *Ladder of Paradise*, gradus 27. Cf. St. Dorotheus, *Doctrina*, 16 (P.G. LXXXVIII, 1793).

³ There were, in 536, sixty-eight monasteries for men in the neighbourhood of Constantinople, and forty in that of Chalcedon (Mansi, *concil.*, Vol. VIII, 1007-1018).

⁴ They were divided into *Stylites*, *Recluses*, and *Boski*.

⁵ *Vita Sabae*, 16, 18 (Cotelier, *Ecclesiae Graecae monumenta*, Vol. III, Paris, 1686). Cf. St. Dorotheus, *id.*

⁶ *Vita Sabae*, 54, 70, etc.

⁷ *Justinian Novels*, CXXIII, 36.

⁸ John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow*, 217 (P.G. LXXXVII, 3018).

Monasticism of this period was generally looked upon as a state of penance, in which faults were expiated. No crime, however grave, could prevent a man from becoming a monk if he so desired. Many entered the convent to atone for a disordered past, or just simply to make their salvation sure. But the Byzantine monasteries of the seventh and eighth centuries contained many less noble vocations, produced from a desire to avoid military service, or for financial reasons, or on account of approaching old age.¹ The Iconoclast persecution, however, purged the Byzantine monasteries, which, in the face of this trial, generously remained faithful to Orthodoxy.² It was, in fact, in the monasteries that the iconoclastic Emperors of Byzantium met with most active opposition. Some famous defenders of the tradition of the Church's devotion to pictures were, or had been, monks: St. Nicephorus³ (828) monk and afterwards Patriarch of Constantinople, St. Theodore of Studium (826), Abbot of the convent of Studium in the outskirts of Constantinople, and, above all, St. John Damascene.

It was in Palestine, at this period, that monasticism reached its most considerable development, thanks to the influence of St. Euthymius the Great, St. Sabas, and St. Theodore the Cenobiarch.

The monks of Palestine were gathered chiefly east of Jerusalem in the mountainous solitude which extends as far as the plain of the Jordan and to the Dead Sea and was called "the monastic desert of Jerusalem." It was there that Euthymius settled in 405.

He was born at Melitene, in Lesser Armenia, in 377.⁴ Ordained priest when nineteen years old, he was appointed, by his bishop, archimandrite over all the monasteries of his native town. Feeling the desire for a more perfect life, he gave up his position and came to the laura of Pharan, near Jerusalem. Drawn to the eremitical life, he soon retired, together with a disciple named Theoctistus, into a cave in the desert at Wady-Dabor. His holiness drew many disciples there, and for their accommodation he built a convent, of which Theoctistus was given charge. As to Euthymius, irresistibly called to a life of solitude, he withdrew to the plain of Sahel, where he founded the famous laura of that name.

The authority of St. Euthymius in Palestine was exceed-

¹ J. Pargoire, *L'Eglise byzantine*, pp. 214, 215. Paris. 1905.

² *Id.*, p. 308 *seqq.*

³ His works in Migne, P.G., Vol. C. Exiled by the Emperor Leo the Armenian, St. Nicephorus died in the monastery of St. Theodore.

⁴ Cyril of Scythopolis. *Vita Euthymii*, in *Ecclesiae Graecae monumenta* of Cotelier, Vol. IV, pp. 1-99. Paris. 1692. Cf. R. Genier, *Vie de Saint Euthyme le Grand*. Paris. 1909.

ingly great, yet it was not great enough to cause the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon to triumph. The monks of Palestine evinced a lively opposition to the doctrine of the two natures in Christ, and thus there was a monastic party opposed to the bishops—i.e., to orthodoxy; and opposition even extended to acts of violence. Theodosius, an intriguing and brutal monk, having recruited a mob ready for any event, from the monasteries, entered Jerusalem, and, crushing all resistance by means of murder and fire, drove out Juvenal, the orthodox patriarch, and installed himself in his place. St. Euthymius was obliged to leave his laura of Sahel for the solitude of Rouba. This was in 452.

The following year Theodosius left Jerusalem and St. Euthymius went back to his laura. He brought back a great number of apostate monks to the orthodox faith. The Empress Eudoxia, who had herself been led astray by Theodosius, was converted by Euthymius. But he had the grief of seeing many monks remain obstinate in heresy, such as the pious, though infatuated, Gerontius, the historian of Melania the Younger, who remained deaf to every appeal and ended his life in rebellion against the Church. The Abbot of Sahel died in 473. After his death his laura became a convent, known as the *coenobium* of St. Euthymius.

Opposition to the Monophysite heresy was continued by St. Sabas,¹ a disciple of St. Euthymius.

He was born in 439 at Mutallosque, near Caesarea of Cappadocia. Family troubles disgusted him with the world, and whilst still young he entered a monastery close to the place of his birth. In 456 he came to Jerusalem, and the following year arrived at Sahel in order to put himself under the direction of Euthymius. The latter, in accordance with the principle that the convent should be the novitiate of the laura, sent him to Wady-Daber to be subject to St. Theoctistus.

Sixteen years later, in 483, St. Sabas went to dwell in a cave south-east of Jerusalem, on the western bank of the Cedron. There he founded the laura which bears his name to-day, and which was known at that time as the *Great Laura*. More than sixty monks gathered round St. Sabas. The Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sallustus, discovered in the ruler of the *Great Laura* an unusual gift of organization and talent for business joined with great sanctity. He ordained him priest and appointed him archimandrite over all the lauras near Jerusalem. St. Sabas showed great activity in the exercise of his new duties. He founded several monasteries, particularly the celebrated convent of *Castellium*, near Jerusalem. He also built churches and hospitals. But his

¹ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Sabae*, in *Ecclesiae Graecae monumenta* of Cotelier, Vol. III, pp. 220-376.

zeal did not stop here. He took considerable pains to provide good government for each *laura* and for the sanctification of the monks as far as possible. The purity of the faith was specially dear to the heart of the holy archimandrite, who defended with great vigour the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon, and preserved his monks from any taint of the Monophysite heresy.

In spite of the wisdom with which St. Sabas governed his *lauras*, there were malcontents, and a band of monks revolted against him. It would appear that they could not forgive him his Cappadocian origin. The rebels founded the *New Laura* in opposition to the *Great Laura*. Sabas at length succeeded in mastering the opposition and subjecting the recalcitrants to a superior chosen by himself. But the *New Laura* seemed to be under a curse from its commencement. In spite of the efforts of St. Sabas, it became a hot-bed of Origenism until the edict of Justinian in 543 proscribed the errors of the Alexandrian Doctor.¹

At the same time that St. Sabas governed the *lauras* of the district round Jerusalem, one of his friends, St. Theodore the Cenobiarch, ruled its monasteries.² He also came from Cappadocia. In 451 he went to Jerusalem and was trained for the religious life by two disciples of St. Euthymius. About 476 he founded, in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, at the *Grotto of the Magi*, his famous convent which sheltered more than four hundred monks. Theodore was noted for his charity; his labours for the feeding of Palestine during the great famine in 513-518 were most efficacious.

The monks of Palestine and of the environs of Constantinople thus lived either in monasteries or else in *lauras*. The latter were not destined to last any length of time. Being more difficult to govern owing to the absence of the common life, the Justinian legislation was unfavourable to them on that account.³ Furthermore, from the seventh century the leaning of monasticism towards the conventual form was most pronounced, and the *laura* ended by disappearing altogether.⁴

The system of the *lauras* did not differ essentially from

¹ St. Sabas died in 532, at the age of ninety-two.

² Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Theodosii Coenobiarchae*, *Schriften des Theodoros und Kyrillos*, pp. 105-113. Usener, Leipzig. 1890. *Coenobiarch* signifies *Head of Monasteries*.

³ *Novels*, CXXXIII, 1.

⁴ The ascetic writers hastened this movement by bringing out the advantage of the common life and the beauties of that living organism which is monasticism. St. Dorotheus (*Doctrina*, VI) compares the monastery to the human body. The rulers of it are the head and the monks occupied with different offices are the members.

that of the ancient colonies of Egyptian hermits. The monks lived in huts, separate one from another, where they gave themselves up to prayer and manual work. They had a superior, who called them together two or three times a week to give them spiritual conferences. On Sundays and feast days there was a liturgical assembly for the celebration of the Eucharist. The divine office, excepting that of the vigil of Sunday, was sung in private. At midnight, at a signal given by the *canonarch*,¹ each religious rose and sang the Psalms of the night office in his cell. Manual work consisted largely in the making of baskets. In the *laura*, as in the monasteries, the principle that he who works not shall not eat was strictly observed.

To these ordinary means of sanctification St. Sabas added a great retreat, which began at the opening of Lent and ended on Palm Sunday.

During this period a notable development in the devotion to the Blessed Virgin is observed in monastic circles. John Moschus, in 620, speaks, in his *Spiritual Meadow*,² of a monk who venerated a picture of the Mother of God, with her Son in her arms, in his cell. This practice was of great help to him in overcoming temptation against chastity.

Another monk caused a lamp to be burnt before a picture of Mary.³ St. Sabas, in order to foster devotion to the Virgin amongst his religious, had the large church of his *laura* built in honour of Mary the Mother of God.⁴

Finally, frequent confession became general among the monks. The custom of confession was stripped very early in Greek monastic circles of that exterior solemnity which accompanied the canonical penance to which the faithful were subjected. The *Rule* of St. Basil recommends monks conscious of any fault to accuse themselves to those amongst them to whom have been committed the dispensation of the mysteries of God⁵—i.e., to priests. In the sixth century St. John Climacus set forth at length the advantage and efficacy of confession, which he recommends with insistence to those monks desirous of greater sanctification.

¹ The religious responsible for giving the signal for the exercises of the *Laura*.

² Chap. xlv (P.G. LXXXVII, 2900).

³ Chap. clxxx.

⁴ *Vita Sabae*, n. 32. Cotelier, p. 264.

⁵ *Reg. brev.*, tract. 288.

II.—THE HAGIOGRAPHERS OR AUTHORS OF THE MONASTIC MEMOIRS AND LIVES OF THE SAINTS: CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, ST. JOHN MOSCHUS, ST. SOPHRONIUS, LEONTIUS OF NEAPOLIS — THE WORK OF ST. SIMEON METAPHRASTES

THE *Lausaic History* of Palladius, as also other collections of anecdotes and pious legends concerning celebrated monks which were to be found in monasteries,¹ became more and more popular in the fifth century. These kinds of writings were multiplied in the following century and produced a special type of literature, the *Monastic Memoirs* and the *Lives of the Saints*. All who were able to write, set down, for the edification of the monks and the faithful, the biographies of holy persons who lived at the time or of whom the memory had been preserved. In the tenth century the celebrated monk Simeon Metaphrastes collected these works together, unfortunately with additions of his own, and thus produced his enormous collection of the *Lives of the Saints*, arranging them according to the calendar.

Hagiography at this period had in view beyond everything the edification of souls. It does not ordinarily evince anxiety for historic exactitude, and insists, at times beyond measure, on the occurrence of marvels without being at pains to establish their truth.

Certain writers, however, had a more accurate conception of hagiography. Among these is Cyril of Scythopolis, thus named from the place of his birth in Palestine.

In his childhood Cyril was acquainted with the celebrated Abbot Sabas. At the age of thirty he quitted his native town in order to live, first of all, in the desert, afterwards in the convent of St. Euthymius, then in the New Laura near Jerusalem, and finally in the Great Laura of St. Sabas, where he died about 560.

Cyril was a born hagiographer. The history of the great monastic rulers of the desert particularly excited his curiosity. He wrote the biography of the famous St. Euthymius the Great, who gave, as has been shown, so great an impetus to the monasticism of Palestine; and afterwards that of St. Sabas, who ruled the lauras of Palestine with such great wisdom. There are other shorter works of his, such as the *Life of St. John the Hermit*² (558), that of Thognius,³ a monk

¹ Such as the *Vita Antonii* of St. Athanasius; the *Apothegms of the Fathers*, or *Vitae Patrum*; the *Historia Monachorum*.

² *Acta Sanctorum*, May, Vol. III; and P.G. CXV, 919-944 (Metaphrastes).

³ *Analecta Bollandiana*, 1891, Vol. X, pp. 73-118.

who became Bishop of Betulia in Palestine (522), that of St. Cyriac,¹ abbot (556), and that of St. Theodore the Cenobiarch, the archimandrite of all the monasteries in the environs of Jerusalem.

In all his works Cyril is always animated with a love of truth. He is also a valuable writer from the point of view of the history of Palestine and Jerusalem in the fifth and sixth centuries.

The work of John Moschus, the *Spiritual Meadow*, is entirely in the style of the *Lausiac History*. It contains short biographies, among which are intermingled many edifying anecdotes and godly counsels concerning the religious life.

John Maschus lived successively in the convent of St. Theodore the Cenobiarch, near Bethlehem, in the desert of the valley of the Jordan, and in the New Laura of St. Sabas, where he was occupied in performing the functions of canon-arch.² Towards the end of the sixth century he paid a visit to the monks of Syria, of Egypt, and even Italy, in company with a disciple named Sophronius. To this disciple is dedicated his work, the *Spiritual Meadow*, in which he gives an account of what he had heard and seen during his travels. He died about 620.

In the beginning of his work John Moschus thus explains the curious title which he gives it :

"The aspect of the meadows in springtime, dearest Sophronius, is very beautiful, owing to the great variety of their flowers. The eye is attracted, the passer-by is charmed, by the ever-varied colour. The sight and perfume alike are most pleasing. On one side the meadows are resplendent with the colour of the rose, and on the other the eye is attracted by the whiteness of the lily, standing out in contrast with the rosier hues. Elsewhere is seen the deeper red, calling to mind the royal purple. . . .

"Such, O holy and most faithful son Sophronius, is also this present work. There thou shalt discover the virtues of holy men, who are distinguished in our time, and who, in the words of the Psalmist, have been planted near the running waters (Ps. i. 3). Although all have been well-pleasing to God, nevertheless each has excelled particularly in some special virtue, and this happy variety in goodness has produced a charming aspect, abounding in graceful beauty. In this meadow of virtues I have chosen some beautiful flowers which do not wither, and of them have I plaited a crown, which I offer thee, most dear son, and which, through thee, I offer to all. I have thus thought it well to call this

¹ *Acta Sanctorum*, September, Vol. VIII, pp. 147-158; and P.G. CXV, 919-944.

² *Spiritual Meadow*, chap. 1.

present work a *Meadow* (Λειμών), because of the pleasure, the perfume, and the usefulness which will be found therein by all those who cull its flowers.¹ . . .”

The memoirs of the *Spiritual Meadow*² relate examples of the observance of monastic discipline, chastity, poverty, and steadfastness in the practice of fasting, of perseverance in watchings and prayer, of specially ardent love of Christ, who was then the object of so many theological controversies. John Moschus enables us to have some suspicion of the murmurings of the monks against the Origenists, against Evagrius,³ and chiefly against the Christological heresies. The Monophysite sect of Bishop Severus of Antioch⁴ was looked upon by him with special horror; the punishments which Providence inflicted on its adepts are narrated throughout the *Spiritual Meadow*. Many eucharistic miracles are related which justify the Catholic doctrine and condemn the Monophysitism⁵ of Severus.

Beautiful flowers of asceticism may also be gathered in the *Spiritual Meadow*, such as the following reflection made by an old monk of the Cells desert to a young one who criticized everyone else :

“Thou judgest thy brethren because thou knowest not yet thyself. For when one knows oneself well one is not desirous of looking into the faults of others.”⁶

And, again, the following discourse of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Ammos, who insists so strongly on the responsibilities of bishops with regard to the ordination of the clergy. When the abbots of the neighbouring monasteries had come to render homage to the patriarch after his consecration he thus addressed them :

“Pray for me, my Fathers, for a heavy and crushing burden has just been laid upon me, and the office of patriarch inspires me with greater fear than I can say. To Peter, Paul, and Moses, and such as resemble them, it belongs to shepherd the souls of the faithful; but as for me I am but a miserable sinner. Beyond all, I dread the responsibility of ordinations. I have, in fact, read, concerning the blessed Leo, Bishop of the Roman Church, that he watched and prayed incessantly for forty days at the tomb of the Apostle Peter to obtain, through his intercession, remission of his sins. And when the forty days were accomplished the blessed Peter appeared to Leo and said : ‘I have prayed for thee and

¹ *Spiritual Meadow*, preface (P.G. LXXXVII, 2852).

² According to Migne's edition they are 219 in number. John Moschus had in view edification. Historical exactness must not be looked for in his work.

³ *Spiritual Meadow*, chap. clxxvii.

⁴ See Tixeront, III, p. 117 *seqq.*

⁵ *Spiritual Meadow*, chaps. xxix, xxx, lxxix.

⁶ *Id.*, chap. cxliv.

thy sins are forgiven, except those which thou hast committed in ordination. For thou shalt always have to give account of the good or defective way in which thou hast performed the duty of laying hands on the ministers of the Church.'"¹

The abbot of the monastery of Monidion, the Scythian Marcellus, recommended the pious recitation of the Psalms to his monks in these words :

"Believe me, my children, nothing molests, alarms, irritates, wounds, ruins, exasperates, or excites the demons and Satan himself, the cause of all evil, against us so much as our perpetual recitation of the Psalms. For if all other parts of the divine Scriptures are of benefit and greatly enrage the demons, nevertheless they do not in that equal the Psalter. . . . For when we recite the Psalms, part of what we read is composed of prayers made for us, and the rest of imprecations against the demons. When, for example, we say, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy great mercy. And according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity (Ps. l. 1) . . .' we pray for ourselves. On the contrary, when another Psalm occurs, and we sing, 'Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered : and let them that hate Him flee from before His face' (Ps. lxvii. 1), we pronounce a malediction on the demons."²

The love which the monks had for Holy Scripture, and chiefly for the New Testament, is evinced by touching anecdotes. A hermit, settled near Jerusalem, had a lively desire to possess a New Testament. Too poor to procure one, he hired himself as a labourer in order to earn sufficient to buy one.³

Finally, in the *Spiritual Meadow* is seen a tender love of the Virgin Mary. The pious observances by which the monks paid honour to the Mother of God are set down with appreciation. In the struggle against heresy Mary miraculously defends those who are faithful to Catholic doctrine. She is the protectress of orthodoxy, and shows heretics in every way that she has no favours for them.⁴

The disciple of John Moschus, St. Sophronius, became Patriarch of Jerusalem in 634, and remained there until his death in 638. He was a valiant adversary of monothelitism, on account of which he is chiefly known to ecclesiastical history. He was also occupied with hagiography, and collaborated with St. John Moschus in a *Life* of St. John the Almoner,⁵ Patriarch of Alexandria from 610 to 619. He also produced a long panegyric on two Alexandrian martyrs, Cyrus and John, who were put to death under Diocletian. Sophronius was beholden to them for the preservation of his sight.

¹ *Spiritual Meadow*, chap. cxlix.

² *Id.*, chap. clii.

³ *Id.*, chap. cxxxiv.

⁴ *Id.*, chap. xlviii.

⁵ Simeon Metaphrastes has preserved a fragment of this life (P.G. CXIV, 895-966).

Finally, he wrote a biography of St. Mary the Egyptian,¹ the famous penitent, who, after leading a disordered life in Alexandria, gave herself up to forty-seven years of austerities in the desert East of the Jordan.

Leontius, Bishop of Neapolis in Cyprus, in the first half of the seventh century, is the author of the celebrated apologetic discourse in favour of devotion to pictures, which prompted the second Council of Nicaea in 787. Leontius explains therein, with great ability, that the devotion rendered to pictures or images is relative, and is addressed really to Christ or the saints represented.²

Leontius, who was a theologian as well as a hagiographer, wrote, for the edification of the faithful, the *Life of St. John the Almoner*,³ which had already been sketched by John Moschus and Sophronius. In a lengthy work, founded on contemporary accounts and eye-witnesses, Leontius made live again that celebrated Patriarch of Alexandria, John the Almoner, who took as his motto: *Compassion and Almsgiving*;⁴ who relieved all the misery known to him by distributing large sums of money among the poor and by revictualing the neighbourhood of Jerusalem after the ravages of the Persians. In virtue of his charity and confidence in God, John was the St. Vincent of Paul of the East at the beginning of the seventh century. His ardent love for Christ was specially shown by the beautiful expression *philochristus*⁵ which he delighted to bestow on Christians. He himself loved Christ passionately.

Leontius furthermore wrote the *Life of Symeon the Simple*.⁶ Symeon, a native of Edessa, visited the holy places, lived for some time in a monastery, and then in solitude in the desert.

Finally, his zeal led him to work for the salvation of souls in an unusual and somewhat eccentric manner at Emesa, in Coelesyria by pretending to be mad, which caused him to receive the surname of the Simple⁷ (Σαλός). Some of the conversions which he effected from among the class of loose women recall those which are told of St. Francis Regis. Symeon was remarkable for his chastity, his gift of divination, and his power over demons.

A contemporary of Leontius, a certain John, monk of the convent of St. Sabas, near Jerusalem, wrote the religious romance known by the name of *The Life of Barlaam and*

¹ The hagiographic works of St. Sophronius are in Migne, P.G. LXXXVII, 3380-3725.

² Cf. Tixeront. III, pp. 448, 449.

³ P.G. XCIII, 1617-1660. Migne gives the Latin translation of Anastasius the librarian (+879). The Greek text was published in 1893 by Gelzer, at Friburg-in-Breisgau.

⁴ *Vita S. Joannis Eleemosynarii*, cap. 7.

⁵ *Id.*, cap. 1, 12, 22, 25. *Philochristus* means: one who loves Christ.

⁶ P.G. XCIII, 1669-1748, and *Acta Sanctorum*, July, Vol. I.

⁷ *Vita S. Symeonis*, cap. 5.

Joasaph.¹ John the Monk, who drew his inspiration from a Hindoo legend concerning Buddha, pictured to himself a story in which a hermit, Barlaam, converted Joasaph, the son of a king of India, to Christianity. The latter was rewarded, after very great effort, by winning over his father and all the kingdom to Christ; he then lived as a monk until his death.

This book extolled the monastic life. It also contained a magnificent apology for Christianity, that religion which alone possesses a true conception of God, and which is able to render those who profess it so good and so perfect. This apology, which is placed on the lips of Nachor the Christian and addressed to Abenner, the father of Joasaph,² is none other than the apology of Aristides (140), a work belonging to the second century which the monk John put into his book with slight modifications. The *Life of Barlaam and Joasaph* was written in a bright and picturesque style, and became very popular in the Middle Ages. It was often cited and plagiarized, and finally looked upon as historical.³

This is not the place to examine, or even to enumerate, all the *Lives* of the saints which were written in the East at this period.⁴ Let us come without delay to the collection of the *Lives of the Saints*, by Simeon Metaphrastes, which is the crowning work of this noble hagiographic movement.⁵

Simeon belonged to an important family of Constantinople. He rose by his own merit to a position of importance at court under the Emperors Leo the Philosopher and Constantine Porphyrogenetos, and was of great service to his country. At the request of the Emperor Constantine, he began his *Lives of the Saints* about the year 915.

The order followed is that of the calendar: each month contains the *Lives* of a certain number of saints according to the dates of their deaths. The order of the *Greek menologies*⁶ is followed. Each biography is usually very drawn out.

¹ This *Life* has been attributed wrongly to St. John Damascene and placed among his works (P.G. XCVI, 859-1240).

² *Vita Barlaam et Joasaph*, cap. xxvi, xxvii (P.G. XCVI, 1108-1121).

³ *Martyrologium romanum*, *Quinto Kalendas Decembris* (November 27). Cf. *Civiltà Cattolica*, November 17, 1882, p. 431 *seqq.*

⁴ See in Migne the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* (P.G. C, 1060-1185), the *Life of St. Nicholas of Studium* (P.G. CV, 864-925), the *Life of St. Theodore of Studium* (P.G. XCIX, 113-232; 233-328) in another edition. In the *Acta Sanctorum* of the Bollandists, second edition: *Vita Anastasii Persae*, January, Vol. III, pp. 34, 35, another edition pp. 45-50; *Vita Eutychii Patriarchae*, April, Vol. I, pp. li to lxx; *Vita Dosithei*, February, Vol. III, pp. 387-390; *Vita Joannis Silentarii*, May, Vol. III, pp. 14-18 of supplement; *Vita Hilarionis Junioris*, June, I, pp. 747, 748; *Vita Methodii Patriarchae*, June, II, pp. 440-447.

⁵ P.G. CXIV, CXV, CXVI.

⁶ A calendar (*μηνή, λόγος*) corresponding with our martyrology and containing a brief account of the lives of the saints commemorated on that day.

Simeon did not write all the *Lives* of the saints which stand in his name. It is not easy to draw up with exactness a list of those of which he is the author. So popular a work was bound to receive additions as time went on. Moreover, we know for certain that Simeon included, not, alas! without retouching them, biographies written by hagiographers before his time.

In writing those biographies of which he is the author he was able to consult a great number of hagiographic documents such as the *Acts* of the martyrs and numerous accounts of the lives of monks and virgins renowned for their sanctity, which were in circulation at that period. As a contemporary of Photius, the celebrated Patriarch of Constantinople of widespread erudition, who compiled, in his *Bibliotheca*, an abstract of many works since lost, Simeon had access to sources of information which we no longer possess.

Unfortunately he made extremely bad use of these riches. Posterity, in surnaming him Metaphrastes, μεταφράστης (the changer, transformer), gives only too true a description of his procedure. Simeon changed and added to all these documents. He treats in an unspeakably easy-going way both chronology and topography, and sacrifices historical exactness to elegant phraseology, poetic description, and a seeking after marvels. His chief interest appears to be devoted to that ornament of style which attracts readers.

These defects did not, at the beginning, hurt Simeon's work. Few books have edified the faithful more, have been copied more frequently, and have had such a success. Latin translations made it known in the West. Surius, the Carthusian (1578) introduced it into his own *Lives of the Saints*. But in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Protestant criticism, hostile to devotion to the saints, violently attacked the work of Metaphrastes, and had no difficulty in ruining its reputation.

It should be remarked, however, that the value of a writing does not consist wholly in its historical accuracy. Simeon had in view, above all, the leading of the faithful into the paths of holiness. In this he succeeded, and from that point of view his work, in spite of its defects, holds an important place in the history of spirituality.

III.—ASCETICAL THEOLOGY : ST. JOHN CLIMACUS, ANTIOCHUS, ST. DOROTHEUS, ST. THEODORE OF STUDIUM

THE most important ascetical theologian of the East at this epoch, who enjoyed a great reputation and exercised an important influence on future centuries, is St. John Climacus. It is to the title of his famous work, the *Ladder* (κλίμαξ)

of *Paradise* (*Scala Paradisi*), that he owes his curious surname.¹

According to his biographer, Daniel,² a monk of the convent of Raithu, on the south-west of Sinai, St. John Climacus was born about 525.

When sixteen years old he entered the famous convent of Mount Sinai. There he remained for several years, and left it to live as a hermit during forty years at the foot of the holy mountain. Returning to the convent again as its abbot, he went out once more and lived again in solitude, where he died about the year 600. His long stay in Sinai gave him the surname *Sinaïte*, and his learning gained for him the title *Scholasticus*, but he is above all known under the name *Climacus*.

Two ascetic works of his have come down to us: the *Ladder*, written for the instruction of monks, and the *Book for Pastors*,³ a shorter work, in which are gathered together the duties of monastic superiors.

John wrote at the request of one of his friends and admirers, the superior of the convent of Raithu, who, like him, was named John. He asked the Abbot of Mount Sinai "to write on new *tables* of Sinai the precepts of the religious life," and to offer them to those who are striving to enter heaven, "like the steps of a ladder by which they may mount to that ever blessed resting-place."⁴ St. John Climacus acquiesced in the wish of his friend from obedience, in spite of his inability, "obedience being, according to the word of the ancients learned in divine things, that virtue which makes us perform that which is ordered without delay, even though it be beyond our power."⁵

The heavenly *Ladder* comprises thirty steps, corresponding with the thirty years of the hidden life of Christ.⁶ Each step forms one chapter of the work, and treats of a virtue to be acquired and a vice to be overcome. The subjects dealt with are arranged in progression: that proper to beginners is placed in the earlier chapters, and the teaching unfolds itself according to the gradual development and progressive perfecting of the spiritual and monastic life. At the top of the ladder are found subjects more fit for those souls who have been raised to the greater heights of sanctity. Perfection is not reached until the thirtieth. And this number has a mystical origin, due to the holy endeavour to make the development of our spiritual life coincide with the mortal life of our Saviour.

St. John Climacus summarized, as was to be expected, the

¹ P.G. LXXXVIII, 632-1164.

² See Migne, P.G. LXXXVIII, 596-608, for this biography.

³ P.G., *id.*, 1165-1209.

⁴ P.G. LXXXVIII, 625.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Scala Paradisi prolog. et gradus*, 30.

spiritual teaching of his forerunners, arranging it together and setting it forth in a clear and tangible way. He did for Greek ascetic theology the synthesis and condensing which St. John Damascene himself did for dogmatic theology. This is partly the reason his work was such a success. He is not, for all that, a writer void of personality. Far from it. He knew how to appreciate justly the thoughts of the older ascetic writers, and to add new views to theirs.

The thirty steps of the mystical ladder by which the soul ascends to God were again divided into three stages of unequal length: detachment of the soul from all earthly things, to lead the monastic life (1-7); the struggle against vices and acquiring of virtue (8-27); the eremitical life, prayer, the Christian *apatheia*, and the union with God by charity.

It is by passing the first stage that the soul succeeds in renouncing earthly possessions. It begins by abandoning the vanity of profane things and fleeing the world.¹ Then it strips itself of all affection for riches, for well-being and for honours; it detaches itself from family life and from all that might distract it from God.

"He who loves God with his whole heart and aspires with all his soul to heaven, who struggles violently to correct his faults, who thinks unceasingly of future judgement and eternal punishment, who lives constantly in the fear of God and in expectation of death, not only thrusts far from him all earthly desire . . . but pursues with hatred his own body, and, denuded of all, and free from all care, he ardently follows Christ, keeping his eyes fixed on heaven, from whence he awaits help according to the word of the prophet: *My soul hath stuck close to Thee, my God*" (Ps. lxii. 9).² Moreover, the pursuit of earthly good produces nothing but sadness and disgust.

The Christian who thus flies from the world and abandons all that is perishable for the monastery and gives himself to piety, undertakes a journey to a strange country (*ξενιτεία*).³ The traveller is a stranger in the land through which he goes. He is unattached to all he sees. The future monk is also a stranger in the world. He ignores and disdains all which does not unite him with God, and he will detach himself wholly from the world if he thinks no more of worldly things.

But when the novice finds himself deprived of everything and separated from his family the demon is not backward in painfully tempting him in a manner which the newly converted know well, as did also St. Antony. In the reflections of the day and in the hours of sleeplessness at night all that

¹ *Scala Paradisi, gradus 1.*

² *Gradus 2* (P.G. LXXXVIII, 653).

³ *Gradus 3.*

has been left appears with wonderful clearness: the possessions and pleasures quitted, the tears of relations left, perhaps, in want with no one to close their eyes at the moment of death. At the same time, the new life, with all its privations and austerities, shows itself to be foolishness, a burden too heavy to be borne. The novice should be warned of this crisis of the soul in order to exorcise it.

The flight from the world and the entire detachment from earthly joys are two virtues with which the soul, as with golden wings, mounts up to heaven. They prepare the religious for that obedience on which St. John Climacus bestows such enthusiastic praise.¹ Obedience, "that complete surrender of one's own will" makes us "travel here below without peril and die without fear," for we are freed thereby from the responsibility of our decisions. The obedient man is like a traveller, who, being led, sleeps as he proceeds. "Our fathers said that psalmody is our arm, prayer our rampart, the tears which we shed our bath; but holy obedience is the witness to our fidelity, without which no one will see God." The long chapter devoted to obedience contains a considerable number of extracts drawn from the lives of ancient monks, who pushed the practice of this virtue to its furthest limits.

À propos of obedience, St. John Climacus treats of confession, which he considers as an excellent means of sanctification. He dwells complacently on its advantages and efficacy. It was made secretly "to an experienced judge." In certain exceptional cases, determined by the superior of the convent, offenders accused themselves publicly before all the assembled monks.²

Sincerity, humility, and gentleness must accompany an avowal of faults to obtain pardon, nor must the penitent ever be prevented from an avowal through shame or confusion: "Uncover and show thy wounds to the physician," counsels St. John Climacus, "and, putting shame under foot, say, 'There is my wound, father, there is my sore, there is the fruit of my softness. None but I is responsible; it is indeed I who am to blame. It is neither man, nor spirit, nor body, nor any other thing but my own negligence which has made me sin.' When thou comest to confess, be in attitude and expression like one condemned, with head bent down towards the earth, and, if thou art able, bathe with thy tears the feet of thy physician and judge as though they were the feet of Christ."³

Confession not only brings us forgiveness for our faults, but is also a brake which stops us from slipping down the slope of evil and prevents our falling back. The demons strive to turn us away from it or at least to dispose us to do

¹ *Gradus* 4.

² *Gradus* 4, 5 (col. 681, 684, 777).

³ *Gradus* 4 (col. 708, 709).

it badly by throwing on to others the responsibility for our faults.¹

He who hears the confessions of his brethren should be filled with goodness and condescension towards them. He is a father—confessors soon became called “spiritual fathers.” He is a judge (κριτής). He is a physician (ιατρς), to whom must be shown the wounds of the soul. He should be, above all, a spiritual man (πνευματικὸς ἀνὴρ).²

Confession is without benefit unless accompanied by repentance and reparation of the fault. St. John Climacus places penitence (μετάνοια) in the sixth step of his mystical ladder, which deals with the detestation of and expiation for sin. In accordance with the style he affects, he gives a collection of definitions, in order to show a complete idea of penitence, which finally produces hatred of sin and reparation by painful works voluntarily undertaken. And for the better understanding of the abstract idea of which it consists, St. John Climacus gives the celebrated account of the austerities practised by certain penitent monks whom he had visited.³

Voluntary recluses, these monks dwelt in a dark, dirty house, full of evil smells, which was more like a prison than a convent. Among them was found every attitude suggestive of deep repentance and most lively sorrow.⁴ Some passed the night outside and on foot, thus preventing sleep. Others raised their eyes to heaven, imploring forgiveness in a voice of lamentation. Others, again, with hands tied behind them, like great criminals, held their heads bent to the ground, mute with sorrow and shame. Others extended on ashes or flint, struck the earth with their foreheads, or else struck themselves violently on the breast, bringing back the memory of their sins. Their tears flowed unceasingly; their wailings, their cries, their shudderings, and their roarings, like those of a lion, were sometimes heard far away, and were enough to rend the hearts of those who heard them and even soften the rocks.

And nothing was more pitiful than the words which were uttered by some of them: “Have pity on us, Lord, have pity on us! Pardon us, Lord, pardon us! We know that we deserve every chastisement and are not worthy to be pardoned. We are unable to expiate the number of our sins,

¹ *Gradus* 4 (col. 705, 709).

² *Id.* (col. 681). An exaggerated seeking after *spiritual* confessors caused the ignorant among the faithful, about the ninth century, to confess to lay monks rather than to secular priests.

³ *Gradus* 5 (col. 764-781). It should be noted that St. John Climacus gives an account of what he saw without expressing approval of what was done in this monastery of penitents.

⁴ This description of the penitential attitude is brought home to us in the picture painted by M. Bovel at Ars, which represents the pilgrims of Ars preparing themselves for confession to Blessed Vianney.

even if the whole world should weep with us for them. We only beseech Thee to spare us from eternal punishment. . . ."

These penitents took no care whatever of their bodies, and took so little nourishment that they were but skin and bone. They pushed contempt of self so far as to request to be deprived of burial at death, and that their bodies, like those of animals, might be thrown into the river or devoured by wild beasts. The superior of the convent seems to have occasionally carried out these astonishing recommendations.

And how dismal was the death of one of these penitents! All the monks assembled round the dying one, and each one reflected on the terror of the judgements of God and on the uncertainty of salvation. They thus addressed him: "O our brother and companion in penitence, in what state dost thou find thyself? What sayest thou? What hope still remaineth? Hast thou found that which thou hast sought with so great labour? Hast thou entered the door of salvation, or art thou still uncertain of thy lot? Hast thou a firm hope of having obtained pardon, or is thy salvation still in doubt? What dost thou answer, brother? Tell us, we beg of thee, that we also may know what lot awaits us. Thy span of life is spent and will not return for all eternity." Some dying ones replied with confidence: "*Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer nor His mercy from me*" (Ps. lxxv. 20). "*Blessed be God who hath not given us to be a prey to the teeth of our enemies*" (Ps. cxxiii. 6). Others said tremblingly, "Has indeed our soul yet passed through the drenching torrents of the powers of the air?" They were still uncertain of their salvation and reflected with anxious fear on what might befall them at the tribunal of the all-powerful Judge. Others, again, made answer still more sad: "Woe to that soul," they cried, "which has broken the monastic vows; only at this last hour will they realize what is reserved for them."

In order to appreciate this chapter on penitence it must not be forgotten that St. John Climacus addresses himself to monks accustomed to a severe spirituality. Like a preacher who would awaken sinners, he has doubtless accentuated the points of this sombre picture. If taken literally, this page of the *Ladder of Paradise* might lead to the conclusion that pardon for sin is very difficult to obtain, and the sinner might allow himself to despair. The convent of penitent monks brings our thoughts to the solitude of Port-Royal des Champs, and its rigorist notions as to penitence would hardly be out of place in the famous sermon of Massillon, *Sur le petit nombre des élus*. But it is a chapter intended for monastic spirituality, and not a treatise on penitence for the simple faithful, in which the teaching as to the conditions for forgiveness is explained with precision.

Nothing is better able to move a sinner to repentance than

the thought of death. That is why it is treated of in the sixth step of the *Ladder*. The constant meditating on death and the uncertainty as to its coming is the best stimulus for the religious in his struggle against vice and pursuit of virtue.

The seventh step, the last in the purification of the novice, is concerned with the afflictions of the soul (*πένθος*), compunction, the sadness which comes from God, which produces spiritual joy, and is that which modern spiritual writers call the spirit of penitence. It is a sadness and a pain of the soul which detach us from created things, make us bemoan our faults and bring us to accept the trials and sorrows of life in the spirit of reparation. With beginners this state of the soul produces silence, fasting, and disregard of insults. In the more perfect it inspires sentiments of deepest humility, and makes them thirst for affronts and contradictions. The tears which it brings wash out the stains that have been contracted and render prayer acceptable to God. St. John Climacus here dwells at length on the gift of tears, on the signs by which it is known, and on the happy results which it produces.

In from the eighth to the twenty-sixth step of the *Ladder of Paradise* are found the vices against which it is necessary to struggle and the virtues to be acquired: anger and gentleness (*Gradus* 8), forgetfulness of wrongs (9), slander (10), talkativeness and silence (11), lying (12), disgust and discouragement (*ἀκηδία*) (13), greediness (14), temperance and chastity (15). This chapter on chastity is noteworthy on account of the appropriateness of its observations, the delicacy in examining temptation and its causes, and the safety in the advice given as to resistance. Chastity, among other advantages, has that of bringing to us the knowledge of God. Without it it is impossible to be "a student of theology."¹ Then come avarice (16), poverty (17), hardness of heart (18), sleep, which must be overcome in order to be intent on prayer and the singing of Psalms (19), vigils (20), cowardice (21), different kinds of vainglory (22), foolish pride and blasphemous thoughts inspired by the devil (23), gentle meekness and innocent simplicity (24), humility, that virtue which destroys all vice (25), the discernment of thoughts, of vices and virtues (26).

In this last chapter concerning the distinction of vices St. John Climacus asks what is to be thought of the list of eight capital vices about which so much was written in the preceding centuries, and of the system by which different vices were derived from one another. According to him, these various kinds of enumeration and classification are unnatural

¹ *Gradus* 30 (col. 1157).

and arbitrary. He states, however, that his considerations on vices and virtues are inspired by the teaching of the ancients.¹ But it is easy to find a strong personal view in his work. Delicate psychological thoughts abound there, as well as things new and suggestive, stamped with a virile spirituality. He carefully distinguishes, in respect of vices and virtues, between the beginners (εἰσαγομένοι), the progressives who have reached the middle of the ladder (μέσοι), and the perfect who occupy the top (τελείοι).² The reader therefore finds in the *Ladder of Paradise* well-trying advice as to the freeing of himself from vice and advancement in virtue. Finally, the enormous importance which St. John Climacus gives to the struggle against vice in the development of Christian life must be well noted. From this point of view he is altogether in agreement with the monastic traditions of the East.

When the soul is freed from its evil inclinations and has mastered its passions it is then able to enter "the tranquil gate of solitude," there to find that peace and calm which are the just reward for the violent struggles sustained.

This gate where the soul rests is the eremitical life, placed by St. John Climacus at the twenty-seventh step of the mystical ladder.

In accordance with the idea which prevailed at that time, St. John Climacus puts the solitary monk above the cenobite. He himself retired into solitude after passing some time in a monastery, and acted thus from a desire to arrive at greater perfection. For, according to him, the eremitical life was not suitable for beginners. It demanded too much strength of soul and constancy. He who entered therein before being sanctified was like a traveller who abandoned a ship, in which he was secure, for a plank. Furthermore, the solitary is sometimes favoured with extraordinary graces, such as a visit from angels. But, "in the same way that it is most dangerous to swim fully clothed, so also it is not apropos to touch divine things while still subject to vice."³

The anchorite should be an angel on earth: his prayer must suffer no negligence. His heart is pure; he enjoys intimate communion with God and tastes the delights of contemplation. He must so detach himself from all earthly things as to live as though he had no body. Many are deluded as to the true life of an anchorite; they withdraw into solitude from misanthropy or a desire to live according to fancy or from vanity.

Having reached that degree of perfection which is embraced in the eremitical life, the soul is raised to that state

¹ Col. 1021.

² Cf. *Gradus* 16.

³ *Gradus* 27 (col. 1097).

of extraordinary prayer which is found at the twenty-eighth step.

St. John Climacus describes this prayer, as did St. Nilus and many other ascetic writers, as a familiar converse and union of man with God (*συνουσία καὶ ἔνωσις ἀνθρώπου καὶ θεοῦ*).¹ Its efficacy is so great that it exercises, in a holy sense, a certain tyranny over the Lord² (*προσευχὴ ἐστὶ θεοῦ τυραννὶς εὐσεβῆς*).

This prayer needs preparation. The soul should present itself before God "clothed in the robe of forgetfulness of wrongs." Otherwise it obtains nothing. Furthermore, it must be pierced by repentance; for to whatever degree of virtue it has attained it has always need to ask forgiveness for past sins. St. Paul, all holy though he was, nevertheless spoke of himself as "the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15).

Then there is progress in the prayer. At first the soul strives to put away all evil, or simply outside thoughts likely to distract; after which it becomes entirely attentive to what is recited, upon which it meditates. The perfection of the prayer is rapture in God (*ραπ γῆ πρὸς Κύριον*).³

Perfect prayer, according to St. John Climacus, is that of the anchorites. It is made in few words, and consists in perpetual union of the soul with God. The soul is enkindled with divine fire, is enlightened and purified as though in an ardent furnace. Cenobites pray, indeed, but not perfectly. Their prayer is laboured, troubled by many imaginations, and expresses itself in a multitude of words. St. John Climacus assuredly was only able to discover perfection amongst the anchorites.

If the soul makes enough progress to reach the twenty-ninth step it enters into Christian *apatheia*.

Summing up the teaching of several ancient writers, St. John Climacus thus defines it: It is the state of a Christian who has purified his flesh from all stain and rendered it, in a manner, incorruptible (*ἄφθαρτος*), as it will be after the resurrection; who has raised his heart far beyond all creatures and subjected every sense to reason; who practises every virtue, for if one only be wanting the *apatheia* is not realized in him; finally, who remains unceasingly in the presence of God. His soul is in a state superior to mortal life. It is insensible to every motion of passion, and also holds in derision the ruses and onslaughts of the evil one. It

¹ Col. 1129. St. John Climacus speaks highly of the form of prayer that unites prayer (*προσευχή*) with meditation on death. Prayer and meditation according to him, conformably with a Christological reminiscence are "two natures in one single person" (col. 1137). Here is seen an outline of our modern "mental prayer" which combines prayer with meditation.

² Col. 1140.

³ Col. 1132.

enjoys a calm comparable to that of the elect. In short, *apatheia* is the heaven of the soul, the palace of the Sovereign King, a state bordering on immortal life.

He who reaches this state possesses God, who dwells within him and rules his thoughts, words, and actions. God gives him inward light, makes known to him His will, and acts in him. In one word, it is no longer he who lives, it is *Christ who lives in him* (Gal. ii. 20).¹

This chapter of the *Ladder of Paradise* has been severely censured. John Gerson (1429) and Dionysius the Carthusian (1471) have even declared that St. John Climacus shows himself therein more Stoic than Christian. It is a hard reproach. But it must be admitted that the teaching of St. John Climacus contains, on this point, some exaggeration. For even if we are able to curb our passions, we are unable to destroy the root of them within us. There is, therefore, no spiritual state in this world, however perfect, in which no fear exists of their awakening, and in which we are able to brave temptation.

Finally, at the top of the *Ladder of Paradise*, at the thirtieth step, are found the three theological virtues which unite most closely all the parts of the mystical ladder. Charity is the crowning and perfecting of the ascent of the soul towards God. It is this that he specially speaks of here.

Charity makes like unto God, as far as it is possible for mortal beings to be so (*ἀγάπη ὁμοίωσις θεοῦ*). It is that which renders the soul perfect. He who possesses charity no longer fears. For to fear the judgement of God no longer, is either to be filled with charity or else wholly hardened in spiritual death. Happy he who loves God to the extent of never ceasing to think of Him and preserving His memory even in sleep! If human weakness necessitates sleep, his heart, overflowing with love, sleeps not.

When the soul is immersed in and entirely penetrated by charity a kind of splendour radiates from it, like the glory which shone round Moses when he descended from Mount Sinai. In this angelic degree of charity, man forgets to take food and hardly feels the need of it. He is nourished invisibly by the fire of love, like roots of plants fed by water beneath the ground.

St. John Climacus ends his book with this prayer to charity :

"Tell us, O glorious and most beautiful of virtues, tell us where thou feedest, where thou liest in the midday (Cant. i. 6). Enlighten us, quench our thirst, guide us, lead us by the hand. For the one thing we seek after is to mount up to thee, who rulest all things. Now that thou hast wounded my heart (Cant. iv. 9) I cannot keep thy flame in check, and

¹ *Gradus* 29.

know not how sufficiently to praise thee. . . . I yearn to know how Jacob pictured thee resting on the heights of the celestial ladder. Show me that which I ardently desire to know, how to mount upwards towards thee. . . . And this also would I learn, how many are the steps, how long the time ere I may ascend to reach thee."

"And charity appeared to me like a queen coming forth from heaven, and spoke thus to the ear of my soul and said: 'Thou who lovest me, so long as thou remainest bound to thy material body thou canst never contemplate my beauty as it is. But that thou mayst learn from this ladder in what order the virtues are developed, know that it is I who occupy the highest place, as St. Paul, my illustrious herald proclaimed: *Now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity* (1 Cor. xiii. 13).'"¹

Such, imperfectly summarized, is the celebrated work of St. John Climacus, which enjoyed so immense a reputation. He has often been commented on, and in the editions which have been quoted the text is accompanied by a large number of scholia or marginal notes. The inspirer of the work, John of Raithu, was also one of its earliest commentators.²

In the *Book of the Pastor*³ John Climacus sets forth the qualities which should be possessed by the superior of a convent. He compares him to the shepherd who tends his sheep, to a pilot who directs his vessel, a doctor who cares for his sick, a teacher who imparts truth. The superior should possess every virtue, especially perfect mortification, for it would be disloyal and a shameful thing for him to impose virtues on others which he did not practise himself.

In his dealings with those under him he should be ever watchful and correct them unceasingly and without fear. He should prevent all disorder. "The wolf fears nothing so much as the sound of the shepherd's crook." He must not be arrogant or pompous, but full of goodness and simplicity. He should deal with each one according to his temperament, his character, and his needs.

It is desirable to note two ascetic writers, contemporaries of St. John Climacus, but of far less importance: the monk Antiochus and the Archimandrite St. Dorotheus.

Antiochus lived at the beginning of the seventh century in the convent of St. Sabas, near Jerusalem. About 620 he published a collection of moral and ascetic proverbs drawn either from the Bible or from the works of ancient ecclesiastical writers.⁴ His object was to provide the monks

¹ *Gradus* 30 (col. 1160).

² P.G. LXXXVIII, 1211-1218.

³ *Id.*, 1165-1209.

⁴ The book is called *Scriptural Pandects*, and is divided into a hundred and thirty chapters (P.G. LXXXIX, 1421-1850).

of the convent of Attaline, of Ancyra, whom the Persian invasion had driven from their home and deprived of a refuge, with a book of small dimensions in which they might find the essential principles of the religious life. At the end of the book is found a prayer, in which are described the sufferings brought about by the Persian occupation of Palestine.¹

St. Dorotheus was the ruler of a monastery in Palestine. When he was a novice he had relations with Barsanuphius, a very famous recluse in the convents of Palestine, author of a work against the errors of Origen and Evagrius.² The disciple inherited the reputation of the master, and the works of St. Dorotheus were placed among the "divine writings of the Fathers."³

His writings, or at least those which are known to us, consist of twenty-four ascetic *Instructions* for the use of monks, and they had considerable success.⁴

Dorotheus often quotes ancient writers. The phrases "according to the sayings of the Fathers" and "as the traditions of our ancestors tell us" occur frequently. A considerable amount of pious discourse is thus preserved to us, such as that attributed to Evagrius touching an important point in the direction of souls: "the works of mercy and exercise of charity are excellent means of extinguishing the fire of passion." Evagrius gives an account of a young monk who was freed from his temptations against chastity by fasting and nursing a sick man.⁵ Dorotheus also recalls a large number of edifying anecdotes drawn from the lives of holy monks, which render the reading of the *Instructions* extremely attractive.

The importance given to humility in the Christian life by Dorotheus is noteworthy. The foundation of the spiritual edifice is faith, he says, without which *it is impossible to please God* (Heb. xi. 6). On this foundation are placed all

¹ P.G. LXXXIX, 1849-1856.

² P.G. LXXXVI, 891-902. See the biography of this man, col. 887-890.

³ Theodore of Studium, *Testam.*, cap. 4 (P.G. XCIX, 1816).

⁴ (Διδασκαλῖαι ψυχωφελὲς) *Doctrina animae perutilis* (P.G. LXXXVIII, 1617-1838). It treats of renunciation; humility; the conscience; the fear of God; mistrust of oneself; the duty of not judging one's neighbour and of self-accusation; malice; lying; the necessity for wisdom in advancing in the way of God; the duty of curbing the passions before they become an evil habit; the fear of hell and attention to salvation; the virile resistance to temptation; the spiritual edifice of virtues and the harmony between them; fasting, the assembling of monks together (reply to the Kelliotes or hermits); the forming of monks and also the way to command and to obey; the responsibilities of the cellarer. Dorotheus then deals with different other subjects, concluding with an instruction concerning exterior monastic deportment. Saint Dorotheus is one of the ancient writers most often cited in works on the Fathers of the desert.

⁵ *Doctrina*, xiv, 3.

the virtues, as so many stones composing the building. The angles which bind the walls together and give solidarity to the whole, are patience and courage, without which no virtue is able to resist. Humility is the cement which binds the virtues together; indeed, it constitutes the very foundation of every virtuous act. The roof of the edifice is charity, the perfecting and completion of all virtue. But the crown, which surmounts the roof and is the topmost ornament, is again humility, which is the crowning of the other virtues.¹ This preference of humility to charity, the queen of virtues, is a pious exaggeration, which would doubtless be criticized by a strict theologian.

St. Theodore of Studium, so named from the monastery of Studium of which he was abbot, was born at Constantinople about 759. He was trained to the monastic life by his uncle, St. Plato, Abbot of the monastery of Saccadion, and was ordained priest. Theodore was the chief defender of the faith during the Iconoclast persecution which was revived by the Eastern Emperors Leo the Armenian, Michael II the Stammerer, and Theophilus, after the second Council of Nicaea. Several times he was sent into exile, where he wrote numerous letters and other works in defence of devotion to images. He died in 826.²

St. Theodore is an authority on Oriental monastic legislation in the ninth century, which is the chief interest he has for us here. His ideas on monastic organization are contained principally in his two *Testaments* addressed to the monks of the convent of Studium, one in 816 and the other some time before his death.

In the second Theodore lays it down that monastic life should always remain faithful to the rules of St. Basil. This tendency towards conventual life observed in monasticism, ended at the beginning of the ninth century in the suppression of lauras, and in making general the Basilian Rule. St. Theodore gave his influence and his authority to this happy change. According to him, the monastic life is a sublime state which causes sin to be effaced by the life of perfection practised therein, always provided that it is conformed to the rules of the *Ascetics* of St. Basil.

"You should change nothing," he advises the superior of his monks, "in the form of life and rule which you have received from me. You should possess no personal property, not even a piece of silver. You must be occupied entirely with your brethren. You must not dispose of the possessions of the monastery either to your relations or your friends, whilst living, or after your death. You must not have a slave to serve you, either for use in the monastery or for the

¹ *Doctrina*, xiv, 2.

² See the two *Vitae Theodori Studitae* in P.G. XCIX, 113-328.

cultivation of the land, for the slave is a man created in the image of God. . . . You must see to it that everything be possessed by the brethren in common. You should arrange for an instruction to be given to the community three times a week either by yourself or by another. You must not enter into friendly relations with a nun, nor enter their convent; the door of your monastery must remain closed to women unless for very grave necessity. If there be an important reason to speak to them, let it be in the presence of a witness on either side. You must have no other rich clothing than the sacerdotal ornaments. . . . You should keep no money in your monastery, but give to the poor all that remains over after providing for the needs of the brethren. You should leave temporal matters to the care of the cellarer, so that you may be occupied with those things which concern souls; but you must see that an account is rendered of temporal expenses, as also of the spiritual state of the monastery. You should take the advice on important matters of two or three monks chosen from the most wise."¹

Complete and respectful submission to the abbot is what Theodore most insists on from his monks. The monastery, indeed, cannot be prosperous unless this authority is fully admitted. Obedience is the essential condition in a community.

IV.—MYSTICAL THEOLOGY: ST. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR.

ST. MAXIMUS, the great opponent of the Monothelite heresy, was, on account of his learning, his sufferings, and his death, a true *confessor* (*ὁμολογητής*) of the faith.

Born at Constantinople about 580 of a famous family, he was promoted, through his connections and owing to his talents, to the responsible position of chief imperial secretary. But he left the court in 630, because Monothelitism, under the protection of the Emperor Heraclius, was in the ascendancy. He withdrew across the Bosphorus to the convent of Chrysopolis, of which he became abbot.

Towards 645, at a solemn conference held at Carthage in Africa, he nonplussed Pyrrhus, the Monothelite ex-Patriarch of Constantinople. Then, returning to Rome, he persuaded Pope St. Martin I to call the celebrated Council of the Lateran together, which anathematized Monothelitism and its adherents, amongst whom were the Emperors Heraclius and Constantius II (642-648). Constantius, deeply offended, had the Pope arrested, who died in exile in 655. Maximus and two of his disciples, Anastasius the Monk and Anastasius the Deputy, were taken to Constantinople and exiled. They

¹ *Testament* (P.G. XCIX, 1818 seqq.).

were condemned to be scourged, to have the right hand cut off, and the tongue pulled out. They died from the sufferings they went through¹ in 662.

St. Maximus, this valiant defender of Catholic truth, was also a keen theologian and deep mystic; the Word Incarnate is the centre of his theology. With his powerful intellect he searched into the mystery of the God-Man, whilst endeavouring to understand the divine influence exercised on our nature.

St. Maximus has nowhere synthesized his mystical theology; he has dealt with it here and there in his commentaries on Holy Scripture and in his dogmatic and polemical writings almost as much as in his *Chapters on Charity*, his *Theological Chapters*, or his *Mystagogy*.²

He is an admirer of Dionysius the Areopagite, to whom he is indebted for a great deal.³ He accepts his theories on affirmative and negative theology, and on the knowledge of God by negation. Maximus also teaches that the true knowledge of God is that acquired by mystic contemplation. This must be preceded, as also required by St. Dionysius, by the purification of the soul, mortification of the passions, and illumination. The soul, thus purified and filled with celestial light, is able to penetrate deeply into the Word, its Spouse, and obtain a mystical knowledge of the Trinity by contemplative prayer.⁴

But the personal element, and that most to be observed in the mysticism of St. Maximus, is the place occupied therein by the Word Incarnate.

The end of contemplation is union with God, by rendering us like to Him and in a manner deifying us. This deification is brought about by love, by charity. It is, indeed, by love that the will of man becomes merged in that of God and is made one with it; it desires that which God desires and condemns what He condemns. And being thus merged it is entirely conformed to Him. It has nothing of earth, being rendered divine through charity. This deification, therefore, is the identifying, by charity, of the will of the Christian with that of God. Through love the will of man and that of God become one and the same thing.⁵

¹ *In vitam ac certamen sancti patris nostri ac confessoris Maximi* (P.G. XC, 68-109).

² The writings of St. Maximus are found in the *Patrologie grecque*, Vols. XC, XCI.

³ He has left some *scholia* on the works of St. Dionysius, which are to be found in the *Patrologie grecque* (Vol. IV), with the works of the Areopagite. See also his *Mystagogy* (P.G. XCI, 657-717).

⁴ *Capita de charitate*, centuria i, 83-100; centuria iv, 86; *Capita theologica et oeconomica*, centuria i, 16; *Diversa capita theologica et oeconomica*, centuria i, 92-95 (P.G. XC, 960-1080; 1084-1176; 1177-1392).

⁵ *Opuscula theologica et polemica* (P.G. XCI, 33); *Diversa capita theologica et oeconomica*, centuria i, 27, 28, 35.

But this assimilation of the human will to the divine is realized first of all in Christ. In Him the two distinct wills exist, contrary to the teaching of Monothelite heresy; but the human will is entirely subject to the divine, and, moreover, one with it, although physically distinct. Christ is thus the model of our own deification; it is He who makes it possible. Those who reject the doctrine of the two wills in the Word Incarnate not only seriously impair the mystery of the Incarnation, but render our deification inexplicable.

It is here seen how important a place in his spirituality St. Maximus gives to the dogma of the two wills in Christ, for which he struggled and suffered so much. The Christian soul, by prayer, by effort, and by contemplation, must imitate the Saviour, who completely submitted His human will to the divine. Like Him, it must despise the good things of the world and cultivate virtue. This teaching concerning the imitation of Christ is very clearly set forth by Maximus in his *Ascetic Book*,¹ in the form of a dialogue between an abbot and a young monk.

The Word Incarnate, therefore, is the one centre of the theology and spirituality of St. Maximus.

The end of all creation is the deification of man, his assimilating with God by charity. It is what all we who are "participants in the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4)² must do. Man possessed this participation in the divine nature before the fall: it was then lost. It must be restored by the Word, which defies human nature by uniting Himself with it and has merited by His death that each one should become deified.³

The Incarnation, therefore, is the great event of the world, which God ordained from the beginning and which makes the object of creation possible. It is why Christ unites everything in Himself, in the same way that the Church unites within herself all the different nations of which she is composed.⁴

V.—THE PANEGYRISTS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN : SERGIUS, ANDREW OF CRETE, ST. GERMANUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, ST. JOHN DAMASCENE

It may come as a surprise to find Sergius (638), the Patriarch of Constantinople, who was the originator of the Monothelite heresy, among the panegyrists of the Virgin Mary. But in the East devotion to the Mother of God did not belong

¹ P.G. XC, 912-956.

² *Diversa capita theologica et oeconomica, centuria i*, 45; *Ep.* XXIV (P.G. XCI, 609).

³ *Diversa capita theologica et oeconomica, centuria i*, 62, 63.

⁴ *Mystagogia*, cap. i.

exclusively to Catholics. Belief in the divine maternity of Mary and her incomparable sanctity was held by those who refused to accept the doctrine of the two natures and two wills in Christ.

In certain circumstances, even, it was thought to be a proof of orthodoxy to admit belief that Mary was truly the Mother of God. When St. Maximus was taken away into exile, passing through a certain town he saw the inhabitants approaching him, who thus addressed him: "We are told that you refuse to call the Blessed Virgin 'Mother of God'; tell us the facts, so that we need not be scandalized in you without just cause." The holy confessor, raising his hands to heaven, answered, weeping: "If any man refuse to say that Our Lady, the Ever Blessed Virgin, is truly the Mother of God, the Creator of heaven and earth, let him be anathema by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost!" Those present, astonished, replied: "Father! May God give you the strength to proceed bravely on your way."¹ And no question at all was raised concerning the doctrine of the two wills in Christ, for which, nevertheless, St. Maximus was in exile and for which he was soon to die.

Sergius is the author of a famous hymn of the Greek Church in honour of the Blessed Virgin, in thanksgiving for the miraculous delivery of Constantinople and the empire from the hands of the Avars in 626. This hymn was sung by clergy and people standing (*ὕμνος ἀκάθιστος*). It is a kind of Greek *Te Deum*.²

This song, the *Acathistos*, as it is called, is by the intensity of its thankfulness and love, by the piety and beauty of its poetry, the most beautiful chant ever composed in the East in honour of Mary.

Andrew of Crete, so named because he occupied the archiepiscopal see of that island at the beginning of the eighth century, was of somewhat doubtful orthodoxy on the question of Monothelism.

Eight sermons of his have come down to us on the subject of the Blessed Virgin. In the first five on the *Nativity* of Mary and on the *Annunciation*³ Andrew collected all the traditions, more or less authentic, which he was able to find concerning the relations of the Blessed Virgin, her doings in the temple of Jerusalem, and, in a general way, her girlhood. The three others⁴ deal with her death. They are inspired from the account of the last moments of Mary, given by Dionysius the Areopagite.

¹ *Acta Sanctorum* (August 13 to III, p. 107. Paris, 1867).

² The *Acathistos* was for a long time wrongly attributed to a deacon of Constantinople named George Pisides (650).

³ P.G. XCVIII, 815-913.

⁴ *Id.*, 104-1109.

Andrew of Crete is specially known as a religious poet. He composed a great number of *idiomela* or religious chants with special melodies, and also *canons* or pieces of chant comprising an endless number of strophes.

St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople (733) found, in his devotion to Mary, the courage which he needed to endure the violent persecution to which he was subjected by the iconoclastic Emperor, Leo the Isaurian. Amongst the writings of St. Germanus are found seven sermons,¹ delivered in honour of the Blessed Virgin, in which are shown his tender devotion to the Mother of God.

But it is, above all, St. John Damascene who deserves to be heralded as the great servant and notable panegyrist of the Blessed Virgin.

Born of a Christian family of Damascus, John seems to have held an important post in the house of the Caliph of that town. About 730 he began his theological campaign by defending devotion to images, which brought upon him the anger of the Emperor Constantine Copronymus. St. John Damascene soon abandoned his position at Damascus, to retire, together with his adopted brother Cosmos Melodius, to the convent of St. Sabas, near Jerusalem. There he devoted himself to piety and study until his death. He was ordained priest about 735.²

St. John Damascene is much more celebrated as a dogmatic than as an ascetic theologian. In his famous work, *The Source of Knowledge*, which began the system followed by Latin theologians of the Middle Ages, John Damascene synthesized, with the assistance of Aristotelian philosophy, the teachings of the councils and of the most authoritative writers of the East. He summarized thus all the tradition of the Greek Church.

But his long sojourn in the monastery of St. Sabas must have drawn his great mind to ascetic teaching. He wrote two treatises for the instruction of monks on the eight capital sins to which they are exposed and on the virtues of the cenobitic life.³ The doctrine set forth is well known to us.

The treatise *Concerning Holy Fasting*⁴ and that on *Sacred Parallels*,⁵ the latter being a collection of extracts from Holy Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and profane writers on moral and dogmatic subjects, are also considered as ascetic works.

¹ P.G. XCVIII, 221-384.

² *Vita Joannis Damasceni* (P.G. XCIV, 429-490).

³ *De octo spiritibus malitiae* (P.G. XCV, 79-86); *De virtutibus et vitiis* (85-98).

⁴ P.G. XCV, 63-78.

⁵ P.G. XCV, 1039-1588; XCVI, 9-442.

It is, however, the homilies of St. John Damascene on the Blessed Virgin¹ which most arrest the attention of Christian piety. A copious doctrine on devotion to Mary is taught there in language inspired by a tender piety. The privilege of the Assumption of our Blessed Lady especially is extolled in enthusiastic terms :

"Wonderful was the death vouchsafed to thee, O Virgin incomparable, by which to go to God ! By what name must this great mystery be known ? Shall we call it death ? For although thy most holy and blessed soul must needs, in fulfilment of the common lot of man, be separated from thy spotless and most noble body, which, indeed, was placed in the tomb ; nevertheless, death hath not kept it in custody, nor hath it seen corruption. For it hath pleased Him who took his flesh from a virgin in order to become man and be born in the flesh, the God-Word and Lord of glory, who after child-birth preserved inviolate His mother's virginity ; Him it hath pleased, when she went forth from this world, to honour her pure and spotless body in preserving it from corruption and carrying it to heaven before the general resurrection. . . . Thy most pure body, then, free from every stain, O Virgin, has not been left beneath the ground, but thou hast been raised with Him to celestial regions ; thou who art truly queen, truly sovereign, and truly Mother of God."²

St. John Damascene, in accordance with Oriental tradition, extolled the Blessed Virgin in inexhaustible language on account of her incomparable purity, her pre-eminent sanctity, her unique dignity as Mother of God, and her rôle of benefactress of the human race, the great motive of our trust in her intercession.

"Hail, thou who art truly full of grace ! Hail ! Because thou art more holy than the angels, higher than the arch-angels ! Hail, full of grace, because thou art more wonderful than the thrones, raised above the dominations, more powerful than the virtues ! Hail, full of grace, because thou exceedest the principalities and art more sublime than the powers ! Higher than heaven and purer than the sun !³ What name shall I give thee, O my sovereign queen ? What words can I use to address thee ? With what praise adorn thy sacred and most fair head ? I shall call thee giver of

¹ P.G. XCVI. There are two homilies on the Annunciation (col. 643-661), two on the Nativity of Mary, dealing largely with St. Joachim and St. Anne (661-697), and three on the death and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin (700-761).

² *Homil. I, in Dormit. B.V. Mariae*, 9, 12 ; *Homil. II*, 18. In this second homily John Damascene gives the Jerusalem account of the death and Assumption of Mary. *Homil. II, in Dormit.*, 4 *seqq.* (col. 729 *seqq.*).

Homil. in Annuntiat. (col. 656).

good things (ἀγαθοδότην), the dispenser of the riches of heaven (πλουτοδότειραν), the ornament of the human race, the honour of every creature, thou through whom all creatures have been rendered truly happy.¹ . . ."

¹ *Homil. I, in Dormit.*, 3 (col. 701). St. John Damascene witnesses to the tradition according to which the Virgin Mary was presented in the Temple when a child. *Homil. I, in Dormit.*, 6 (col. 708, 709); *De fide orthodoxa*, lib. IV, cap. xiv.

CONCLUSION

THE first remark suggested by the study which has just been brought to an end is that, under a variety of forms of religious life, the same spiritual doctrine is always to be found.

Perfection consists in following Christ, in clinging to Him by love. The realization of this union with Christ is brought about by renunciation of self and the good things of this world. The more complete this renunciation the closer the attachment to Jesus.

The practice of Christian virtue, then, consists, by inverse ratio, in the union with Christ and renunciation of things here below.

The means of rendering our union with Christ more perfect are, in the first place, fervent prayer. In earlier days of Christianity this prayer consisted principally in the recitation or singing of Psalms. The Psalter, indeed, may be considered to be the standard of prayer. Every religious aspiration finds there its most divinely beautiful expression: adoration, praise, wonder, thanksgiving, repentance, supplication, confidence, love. To earnest prayer was joined participation in the Eucharist, fasting, and other austerities which stand out so markedly in asceticism, in the first rank of which must be placed the practice of continence. The first ascetics lived in the midst of the world, in their families; then, when monasticism sprang into being, they retired to the desert and fixed their abode in monasteries.

The monks of antiquity are celebrated for their terribly severe penances. They mortified themselves most rigorously, to the end that the fire of passion might be completely extinguished.

They struggled strenuously against the devil, the principal source of temptation, who of himself, or through his instruments, instils into souls the evil to be fought by abetting the tendency to sin in human nature.

With greater precision the spiritual writers, after the Pelagian controversies, looked upon the heart of fallen man as the most formidable source of the instigation to sin. The devil is only really formidable because our concupiscence is already on his side. It is, then, within us, rather than outside ourselves, that we must wage the battle, and our soul is the arena where we maintain the unceasing struggle. The work of our sanctification is wholly interior; it consists in correcting by mortifying effort the unruly inclinations of the soul and keeping them constantly directed towards God by advancing in the practice of charity.

The special devotions of this period had the person of Christ and that of His holy mother particularly in view.

The Saviour is truly at the heart of all Christian piety. To

love Him, serve Him, imitate Him, and obey Him perfectly, such are the duties incumbent on the fervent faithful and on religious. Perfection consists for each one in becoming like Christ as far as human frailty allows.

Devotion to Christ has its completion in that to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Mother of God is revered on account of her exquisite purity, her pre-eminent holiness, her incomparable dignity and all-powerful intercession in heaven.

For the most part, the ascetics belonging to the period which we have just surveyed invest their spirituality with a certain tone of pessimism, for they well know that fallen human nature is not wholly good. They find in it something false to be redressed, an original disorder to be destroyed. The *old man*, in a word, to be overcome. They undertook the struggle against themselves with harshness, calling to mind the words of Christ: "The kingdom of heaven *suffereth violence and the violent bear it away*" (Matt. xi. 12). Experience taught them that the greater the violence done the greater was the progress made: and thus they waged war against their passions with a strength of armament never to be surpassed.

St. Francis of Sales knew how to mask—I do not say to suppress—the weapons with which the Christian should slay his evil tendencies. It is with a smile on the lips that he guides his Philothea in this struggle against herself. The ancient ascetics, especially the monks, present to us, on the contrary, stern looks and furrowed brows; and in this attitude there is something more virile, more appropriate to the soldier of Christ.

If it be possible, like the Bishop of Geneva, to advance with smiling lips towards perfection, most assuredly it cannot be reached by trifling on the road. Make-believe may amuse the weakling and the dilettanti of asceticism, but, on the other hand, may deceive serious souls by exposing them to the danger of stopping short at a certain semblance of piety, without acquiring the reality, which is to be like unto Christ crucified (Rom. vi. 5). If, in spirituality, pessimism properly so-called has no place, it is as important to guard against an exaggerated optimism, for which mortification is but a remnant of Jansenism, rendering this world so pleasant as to make us lose the yearning for heaven as our true home. Moreover, Providence at times takes heed to remind us, by permitting fearful ordeals such as that of the Great War, that we are here below as pilgrims, as strangers and exiles, that we dwell in a valley of tears, where we must detach ourselves from all things.

Finally, I would end by remarking, ancient ascetic writers have left us no synthesis of spirituality. The nearest

approaches to this are, among the Latins, the *Conferences* of Cassian, and, among the Greeks, the *Ladder of Paradise* of St. John Climacus. But in spite of the great merit of these works, it is true that before the Middle Ages spirituality was nowhere collected together in a complete body of doctrine. This work was carried out by the writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in their *Theological Summaries*, in which spirituality was thoroughly synthesized together with morals and dogma.

We find appearing, also, at this same period the *Schools* of spirituality. Monasteries in the West began to federate and form themselves into monastic *congregations*. The Mendicant Orders were created. Each of these groups, each spiritual family, had its particular spirit, its own characteristic, its distinctive attitude towards asceticism, and formed a school apart. In Christian antiquity the particularism which rendered each monastery fully independent allowed of nothing so clearly determined. This variety in the way souls adapt themselves, according to their temperaments, to the same principles of perfection taught by Christ, is one of the most captivating aspects of the study of spirituality.

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